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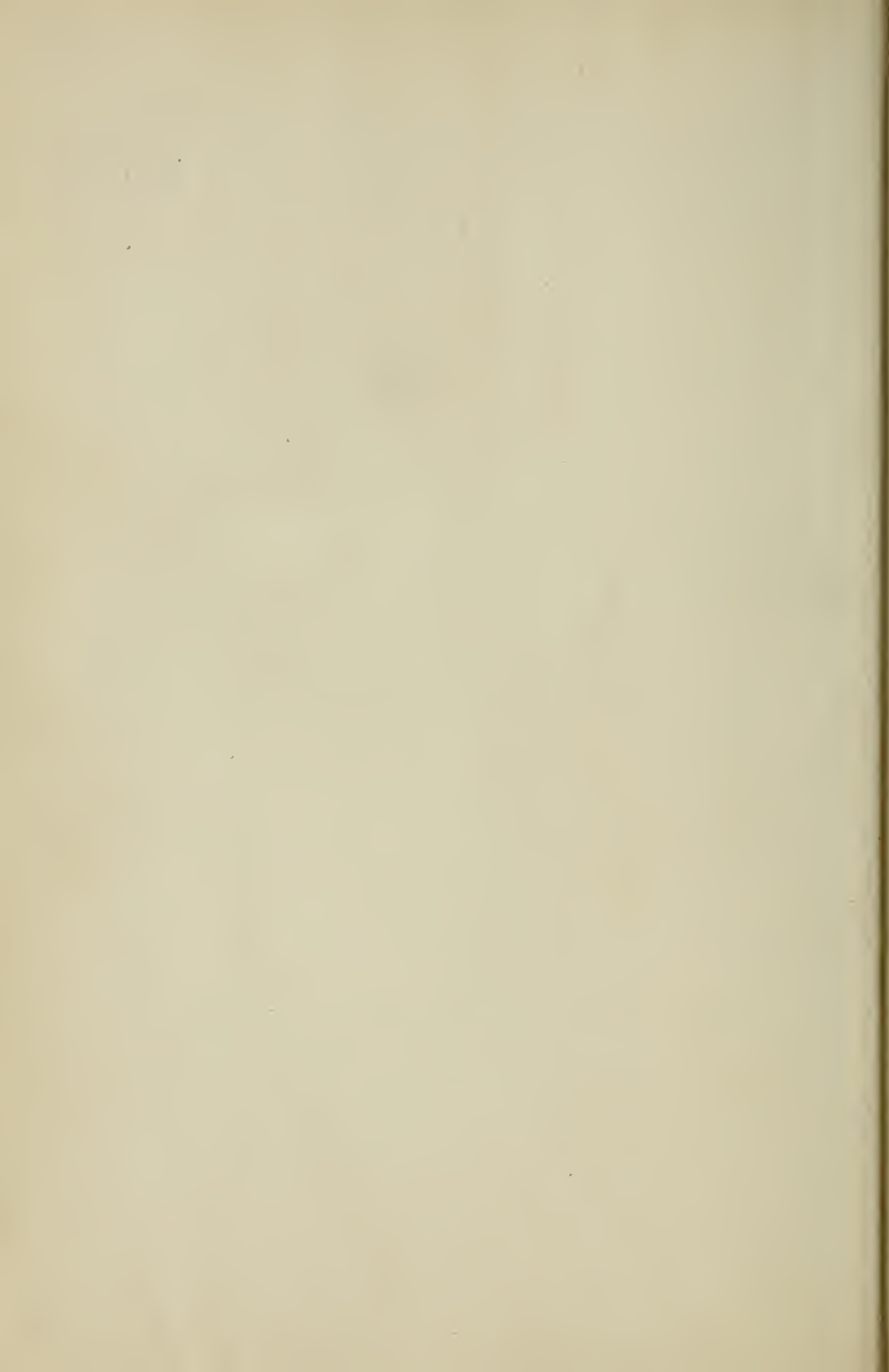
FORE EDGE PAINTING. Vizetelly (Henry). The Story Of The Diamond Necklace Told in Detail for the First Time by the aid of Contemporary Memoirs, Original Letters & Official & Other Documents. Comprising a Sketch of the Countess de la Motte, pretended confidant of Marie-Antoinette, with particulars of the Careers of other Actors in this Remarkable Drama. 12mo, full blue straight-grain morocco, raised bands, richly gilt paneled spine, elaborately gilt frame-work borders on sides, wide inner gilt dentelles, all edges gilt, by Riviere. London, 1881.

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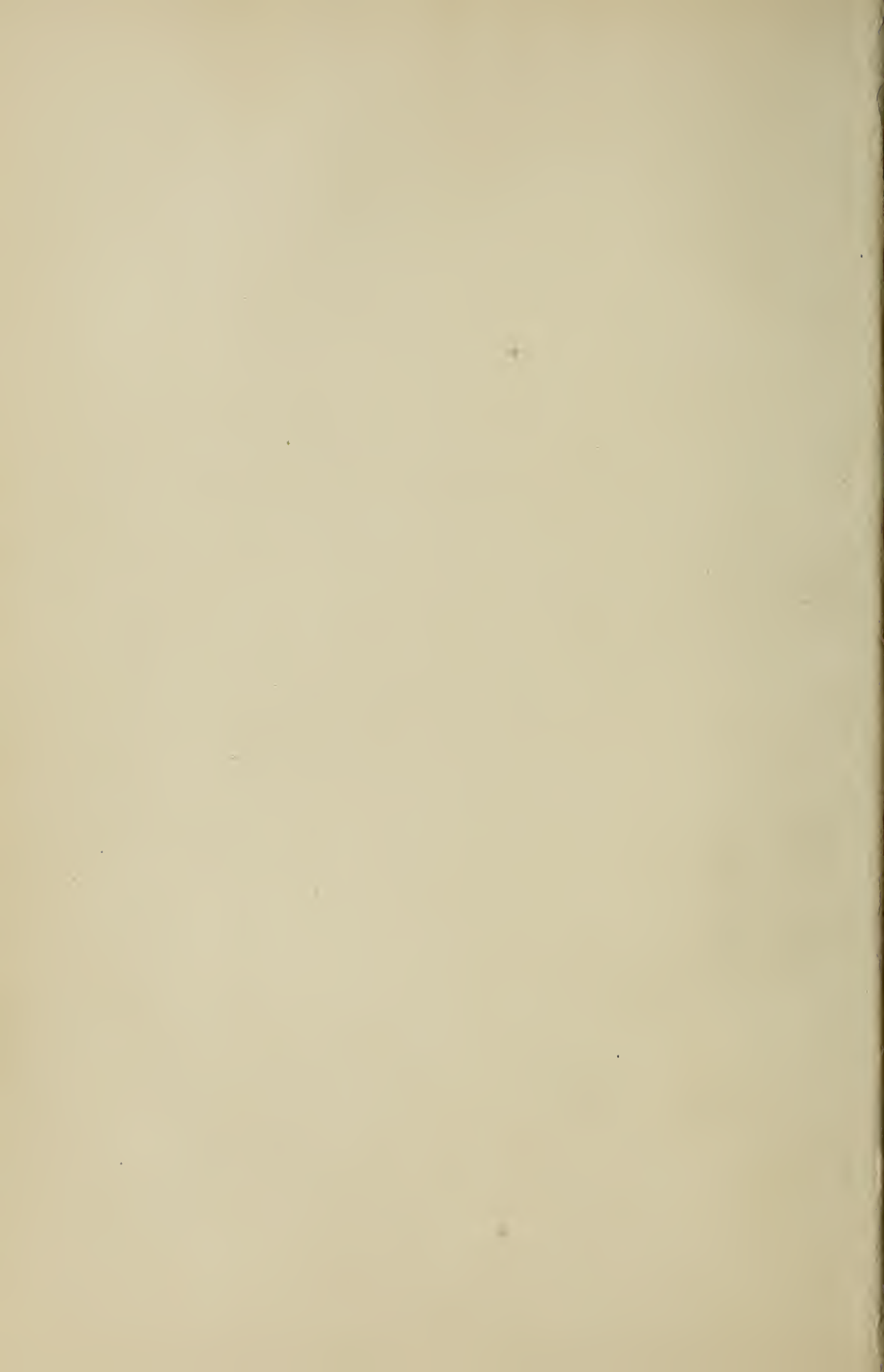








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THE STORY OF  
THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

TOLD IN DETAIL FOR THE FIRST TIME

BY THE AID OF CONTEMPORARY MEMOIRS, ORIGINAL  
LETTERS, AND OFFICIAL AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

AND COMPRISING

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF THE COUNTESS DE LA MOTTE, PRETENDED CONFIDANT  
OF MARIE-ANTIONETTE, WITH PARTICULARS  
OF THE CAREERS OF THE OTHER ACTORS IN THIS REMARKABLE DRAMA.

By HENRY VIZETELLY

AUTHOR OF "BERLIN UNDER THE NEW EMPIRE," ETC.

Third Edition, Revised

LONDON

VIZETELLY & CO., 10 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND

1881.

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TO A. E. V.

THE LIGHT OF MY HOME, THE HAPPINESS OF MY LIFE,

I DEDICATE,

WITH MUCH AFFECTION,

THIS RECORD OF AN ERRING WOMAN'S CAREER.

H. V.

PARIS, 1867.





## ADVERTISEMENT.

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“THE STORY OF THE DIAMOND NECKLACE,” which met with marked success at the time of its first appearance—two editions in an expensive form having speedily become exhausted—has been out of print for some years. The author was unwilling that it should be re-issued until it had been subjected to a complete revision, and this more pressing occupations have obliged him continually to postpone. Having at length found the necessary leisure, he has thoroughly revised the work, availing himself of a new study of the documents preserved in the French National Archives for this purpose, and incorporating in the present volume such additional facts relative to his subject as the investigations of recent years have brought to light. If the work in its new form meets with anything like the favour which was accorded to the early editions, the author will feel himself amply rewarded for the extra labour he has expended in rendering it more complete.

LONDON, *October*, 1880.

Several critics of the first edition of this work took the author to task for regarding as genuine the autograph letters of Marie-Antoinette and others, comprised in the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches, and expressed their surprise at his ignorance of the controversy which had taken place on the subject of their authenticity, and had resulted, they said, in the almost universal condemnation of these documents by both French and German critics. The author was not only fully acquainted with all the details of the controversy in question, but he had carefully examined the letters themselves—not their contents merely, but the character of the handwriting, and had studied its variations at different periods of Marie-Antoinette's career; and he had come to the conclusion, in common with the majority of French writers who are regarded as authorities on matters pertaining to the history of France during the latter half of the eighteenth century, that the impugned documents are, with certain exceptions, perfectly genuine. The above remarks, it should be noted, apply exclusively to the autograph letters in M. Feuillet de Conches' collection, and not to the exceedingly dubious letters published by Comte d'Hunolstein.

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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THE great scandal of the Diamond Necklace, which to the clear vision of Goethe presaged the coming Revolution, and in which the quick-witted Talleyrand saw the overthrow of the French throne, possesses an interest akin to that of the French Revolution itself. The story is one of which the world does not seem to tire, for it has been told scores upon scores of times, and more or less recently, by historians, biographers, essayists, memoir-writers, anecdotists, novelists, and dramatists, and in well-nigh every European language. In the form in which it appears in the Memorials and Judicial Examinations of the parties accused of complicity in the fraud, it has been pronounced "the greatest lie of the eighteenth century," and numerous active brains have essayed to unravel its tangled web of truth and falsehood; nevertheless, there are many persons who still think that a certain mystery envelops the transaction which all the research hitherto bestowed upon it has failed to satisfactorily clear up.

The writer of the present work has diligently studied all the contemporary evidence, bearing in the smallest degree on the subject, which an active search enabled him to discover, and the bulk of which he has availed himself of in the course of the subjoined narrative. This includes, for example, unpublished autograph letters and documents, written either by actual actors in the drama, or else by persons intimately associated with it, and derived chiefly from the valuable collection of M. Feuillet de Conches; the official records of the judicial proceedings to which the affair give rise; the various memorials put forth on behalf of the accused, and the memoirs subsequently issued by them, including the exceedingly scarce *Mémoire* by Rétaux de Villette, which the present writer is the first to quote from, and the curious Auto-

biography written in his old age by Count de la Motte; the discussions in the Paris Parliament; and the numerous memoirs penned by persons living at the time, some of which, and these of the highest importance—such as the interesting Memoirs of Count Beugnot—having been only recently made public, were not at the command of previous writers. In addition to the foregoing sources of information may be mentioned the different biographies, and the various critical disquisitions of historians and essayists in which the subject has been so exceedingly fruitful, and of which considerable use will be found to have been made.

With such materials at his command, the writer has been able to tell the story for the first time in all its fulness, and as he believes more in accordance with the truth, in small matters as well as great, than any previous narrative of the transaction. He conceives that he has completely exonerated the French queen from the slightest suspicion of complicity in the miserable fraud. He has made a point of supplying missing dates to the more trivial as well as to all the more important incidents, of vouching every statement of the smallest consequence, and of giving the very language of the witnesses to the various facts which they are called upon to prove. He has, moreover, visited most of the scenes with which the chief incidents of the story are mixed up, and has described them with more or less minuteness in the course of his narrative.

It is proper to mention, with regard to some few of the authorities referred to in the following pages, such as Madame Campan's and Weber's "*Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette*," Madame de la Motte's "*Mémoires Justificatifs*," and the "*Mémoire pour le Comte de Cagliostro*," that the French and English versions of these works have been indiscriminately used, and that the references given, if they do not apply to the one, will be found to belong to the other edition of the works in question.

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“THOUGH the descendant of a king, I have been a beggar, a servant, a mantua-maker’s apprentice, and the favourite of royalty . . . . The names of a great queen and of a prince-cardinal unhappily united with mine have spread a blaze around it to attract general notice ; and as if I was doomed to be the victim of painful splendour, the ingenuity of my enemies have found means to forge the chains of my dishonour out of a Diamond Necklace.”—“Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself,” vol. i. p. 267, and p. 6 of Preface.

“Faites attention à ce misérable Collier, je ne serais nullement surpris qu’il renversât le trône.”—*Talleyrand to Chamfort*. “Histoire Monarchique et Constitutionnelle de la Révolution Française,” par E. Labaume, vol. ii p. 139.

“I would caution them to despise those who, hacknied in systematic scandal, feast upon the bleeding reputations of their sisters mangled and torn by calumny ; let them demand of those who convey such vile insinuations some proof of the circumstances which they relate ; let them sift them thoroughly to the bottom ; *let them inquire the character of the tale-bearer ; let them ask how, where, and when, and whether she knows the woman whom she has so eagerly attempted to disgrace.*”—“Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself,” vol. ii. p. 410.

“Do not the critics teach us : ‘In whatsoever thing thou hast thyself felt interest, in that or in nothing hope to inspire others with interest.’ In partial obedience to all which and to many other principles shall the following small Romance of the Diamond Necklace begin to come together. A small Romance let the reader again and again assure himself, which is no brain-web of mine, or of any other foolish man’s, but a fraction of the mystic ‘spirit-woven web’ from the ‘Loom of Time.’ It is an actual Transaction that happened in this Earth of ours. Wherewith our whole business is to paint it truly.”—“Carlyle’s Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,” vol. iv. p. 5.



# THE STORY OF THE DIAMOND NECKLACE.

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## I.

1764.

A SCION OF ROYALTY IN TATTERS.—“TAKE PITY ON THE ORPHAN  
DESCENDANTS OF HENRY II., KING OF FRANCE.”

RATHER more than a century ago, in the year 1764, just as death had closed the career of the once all-powerful Madame de Pompadour, who had long since exhausted all her arts in vain endeavours to revive the jaded passions of her royal lover, and when the star of the notorious Dubarry was gaining the ascendant, the Marquis and Marchioness de Boulainvilliers, attended by servants and outriders in the gayest of liveries, were driving one day in a carriage and four from their hôtel at Paris to the château of Passy, of which pleasant river-side village the marquis was *seigneur*. All at once their attention was attracted to a little girl about eight years of age, clad in the beggar's accustomed livery—rags and tatters, who, carrying a younger sister on her back, ran beside the carriage, at that moment proceeding up the hill at a slow pace, and appealed for charity after the following strange fashion :—“Kind lady and gentleman, pray take pity on two poor orphans descended from Henry the Second of Valois, King of France.”

The marchioness, struck by the singularity of this appeal, stopped the carriage and commenced questioning the child, much to the annoyance of her parsimonious husband, who petulantly remarked she ought to know well enough that it was a common trick of poverty to forge lies to excite compassion. The marchioness, however, persisted in her inquiries, and ascertained from the child whereabouts she lived, then, after promising to see into the truth of her statement and telling a servant to give her a few pieces of silver, the lady, greatly to the satisfaction of her impatient husband, gave directions for the carriage to proceed.

The next day, in accordance with her promise, the marchioness despatched a trusty servant to the place where the children lodged, at the adjacent village of Chaillot, facing the river between Passy and the then fashionable Cours la Reine, where the commonality—in other words, those who wore “frieze, woollen stockings and cloth hoods”—were forbidden to show themselves. At Chaillot the people of the house, and the neighbours generally, confirmed, so far as they were able, the truth of the little beggar girl’s story, which, as this partakes largely of the romantic, and exercised moreover an important influence on our heroine’s subsequent remarkable career, we propose recounting here in all the necessary detail.

## II.

1717-1764.

## THE SAINT-REMIS OF VALOIS.—A TRAMP UP TO THE CAPITAL.

FOR a couple of centuries there had resided at Bar-sur-Aube, in the Champagne, certain Barons de Saint-Remi, the first of whom was Henri de Saint-Remi, an illegitimate son of Henri II. of Valois, King of France, lover of the beautiful Diana of Poitiers ; the same who had the ill luck to be accidentally killed at a tilting-match by a lance thrust in his right eye from the captain of his Scottish guards, the Count de Montgomerie, ancestor of our Earls of Eglinton. This son of his, Henri de Saint-Remi, was, in heralds' language, "High and Puissant Lord and Knight, Baron and Seigneur of the Manors of the Chatellier, Fontette, Noez and Beauvoir, Knight of the King's Order, Gentleman of the Bed-chamber in ordinary, Colonel of a regiment of horse and a regiment of foot, and Governor of Château-Villain." In the course of a few generations, however, the Saint-Remis appear to have fallen from their high estate, and their broad manors to have become entirely alienated from them, inasmuch as we find that Nicolas de Saint-Remi, the great-grandson of the Henri before mentioned, instead of being styled "High and Puissant Lord and Knight," and Seigneur of various extensive domains, and the holder of numerous offices about the person of the sovereign, was merely one of the king's body-guard in the Duke de Charost's company. He married the daughter of Nicolas-François de Vienne, a great man in the royal bailiwick of Bar-sur-Aube, who seems at this period to have been the possessor of two of the Saint-Remi manors, namely, Noez and Fontette. The children that sprung from this marriage were two sons, the elder of whom was slain in battle, while the younger, Jacques de Saint-Remi, was father of the little beggar girl whom we found running beside the Boulainvilliers' carriage asking alms.

Jacques de Saint-Remi de Valois, in spite of his illustrious descent, seems to have gradually sunk to the level of the peasant class, and the indigence to which he found himself reduced was aggravated by his imprudently marrying a young girl with a pretty face, but of vulgar manners and somewhat loose morals, the daughter of his *concierge* at the time he had a house to shelter him. The offspring of this union was a son and two daughters, born respectively in the years 1755, 6, and 7, but small as his family was, Jacques de Saint-Remi seems to have been unable to support it. One who knew him well describes the last of the barons of Saint-Remi as a man of athletic build, who lived partly by poaching and by depredations in the adjoining forest, partly by plundering his neighbours' fields, and partly on the charity of the benevolent.<sup>1</sup> The vast estates which formerly belonged to the now impoverished family had gradually dwindled away, some having been sold to meet the demands arising from the extravagance of successive owners, while others had passed into the hands of lawyers and money-lenders. At this period there nevertheless remained three domains of considerable extent, deeply encumbered, it is true, with debts, but still open to some real or fancied claim, which, although the beggared heir of the house of Valois had no means of enforcing it, was nevertheless the reverie and abstraction of his life. A few sheets of musty parchment, the surviving title-deeds of his house, the last wreck, so to speak, of the vast landed property of the Saint-Remis of Valois, were kept by him carefully stowed away under the straw thatch of his miserable hut. To pore at times over these old parchments was the one act of worldly vanity in which Jacques de Saint-Remi permitted himself to indulge, but the woman he had married was not so easily satisfied. The continual display of these mysterious documents kindled her ambition, until at length it was raised to such a pitch, that she prevailed on her husband to set out for Paris, there to endeavour to make interest among the great for the restoration of those rights to which as heir of the house of Valois she conceived him to be entitled.

After disposing of such few movables as they possessed, the wretched family set forth and literally tramped up to the capital,

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot, ancien Ministre," (Paris, 1866,) vol. i. p. 7.



a distance of nearly a hundred and fifty miles. That they might not be burthened on the way by their youngest child, then about three years old, the unnatural parents left it behind them, exposed on a window-sill of the house of one Durand, "a wealthy and avaricious farmer," to quote the eldest sister's own words, "who, being in possession of a great part of my father's estate, and having stood sponsor to this unfortunate infant, was therefore deemed the most proper person to be her future protector."<sup>1</sup>

On their arrival in Paris, in a state of extreme destitution, the Saint-Remi family shifted their place of residence from one suburb to another until they eventually settled down at Boulogne, then merely a small village on the banks of the Seine, opposite to St. Cloud. Here they lived upon such charity as the gentry of the neighbourhood, attracted by the singularity of their story, from time to time bestowed upon them. The father at this period had fallen into a stage of dotage, and the mother's pet idea of an appeal in high quarters for the restoration of the family estates had to be sacrificed to the powerful struggle which they were forced to make for their daily bread. Months thus passed away, until one day Jacques de Saint-Remi, for some cause or other—most likely an unpaid baker's bill—was arrested by an officer of the marshalsea (mounted police) of Boulogne, and locked up in a loathsome cell, where he remained for six weeks. Here the poor man contracted a serious illness, and on his release, which was brought about by the intervention of the *curé* of the parish, the only retreat which the efforts of his neighbours, for friends he had none, were enabled to provide for him—a descendant of the blood-royal of France—was a pallet in one of the wards of the Hôtel Dieu. Here he died, a couple of days afterwards, on the 16th February, 1762.

Within a few days of the death of Jacques de Saint-Remi his wife gave birth to another daughter, and as soon as she was recovered from her confinement, the family removed to Versailles, where the mother made a practice of sending the children into the streets to beg. Jeanne, the eldest daughter, and the heroine of our story, appears to have been treated with great harshness by her mother; for unless the child brought home ten *sous* on ordi-

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," (London, 1791,) vol. i. p. 7.

nary days, and double that amount on Sundays and fête days, as the fruits of her mendicity, she was subjected, she tells us, to the cruellest punishment. The mother had at this time formed a disreputable connection with a disbanded common soldier—one Jean-Baptiste Raymond, a native of Sardinia—with whom mendicancy was a positive passion; for, in disregard of the authorities, he made it his daily practice to beg in the most public places of Paris, having with him the young Jacques de Saint-Remi, and the family documents, which he boldly exhibited to the passers-by in support of a pretended claim which he himself set up to the honours of the house of Valois. Jean-Baptiste was arrested by the police time after time, for plying his nefarious trade with such marked audacity, and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. He was, however, incorrigible, and the authorities at last determined upon getting rid of him. After sending him to prison for a further term of fifteen days, they ordered him to be exposed for four-and-twenty hours in the Place de Louis Quinze—subsequently the Place de la Révolution, where for two years the guillotine did its bloody work, and now the handsome Place de la Concorde—with an inscription setting forth the nature of his imposture, and copies of the titles he had falsely assumed hung round his neck. This public exhibition at an end, Jean-Baptiste Raymond was banished for five years from the capital.

When the day arrived for his departure, the unnatural mother of the young Saint-Remis set out with her paramour, leaving behind her three children, whom she promised to rejoin in eight days at the very outside, to shift for themselves. Five weeks, however, elapsed without any tidings of her, and it was at this particular moment that the poor children, deserted by their only remaining protector, and reduced almost to a state of starvation, had the good fortune to attract the notice of the kind-hearted Marchioness de Boulainvilliers.

## III.

1764-1779.

MANTUA-MAKER'S APPRENTICE.—PENSIONER UNDER THE CROWN.—  
BOARDER IN A CONVENT.

THE Boulainvilliers' lacquey, satisfied with the inquiries he had made, directed the children to take leave of those kind neighbours who had so constantly befriended them, and afterwards to come on to Passy, where they were to inquire for the château, which stood, by-the-way, on the precise spot where the pleasant "Hameau de Boulainvilliers" now stands. But few preparations being necessary for their departure, they were soon on their road, and reached the château in the course of the afternoon. Their arrival being announced, they were conducted "into a grand hall, in the centre of which rose a magnificent staircase richly ornamented with gold, where a large company of ladies and gentlemen were waiting to view them."<sup>1</sup> The marchioness descending to the middle of the staircase, asked young Jeanne whether she remembered her again, an inquiry which it is almost needless to say the child promptly answered in the affirmative.

The company having gratified their curiosity at a distance, for no one dared venture into too close proximity with these wretched outcasts, covered as they were with rags and dirt, the marchioness gave orders for them to be cleansed, and for other clothes to be supplied them. A good scrubbing having brought to light indications of various diseases, the usual concomitants of poverty, steps were taken for their speedy eradication; and in the course of a few weeks, thanks to the attention the children received, and to the generous food provided them, all traces of their former wretched condition were effaced.

The marchioness's next care was the education of the young

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 41.



orphans, and Jeanne and her sister were sent to a boarding-school in the neighbourhood, where they made rapid progress. In less than two years, however, the youngest girl died of the small-pox, at that time a disease not only very prevalent, but commonly fatal. Jeanne remained at school for several years longer; but during the latter period of her stay, her governess, she tells us, unknown to the marchioness (whom the young Saint-Remi saw but rarely), compelled her to perform the common offices of a domestic servant. "This employment," she observes, "against which it was useless to remonstrate, was but ill adapted to those elevated notions which reflections on my birth had inspired me with. Was it not," she asks, "painful to feel that, descended as I was from the first family in France, I was yet reduced to be a servant to people of the very lowest rank, nay, even to servants themselves?"<sup>1</sup>

At length, at her own request, Jeanne was removed from school, but the marquis, who was half a Jew—his mother being a daughter of Samuel Bernard, the rich Hebrew banker, whom even the "Grand Monarque" would condescend to take by the arm when he was hard up and wanted to coax a loan out of him, and whom the court ladies used to cheat at the queen's card-table—objected to her continuing a pensioner on the Boulainvilliers' establishment. With the view therefore of placing her in a position to provide for herself, Jeanne was articted to a Parisian mantua-maker for a term of three years. Ill-health, however, compelled her to leave before completing the engagement, and she filled one situation after another, subject to constant attacks of illness, until at length a change in the fortunes of the family made it no longer necessary for her to labour for her daily bread.

The young Jacques de Saint-Remi had received his education under the care of M. Leclerc, the husband of his sister Jeanne's governess, and on its completion had been sent to sea. About this time he returned home from his first voyage, and the marchioness, having got together various documents in support of the claim of the family to the honours of the house of Valois, consulted with the Marquis de Chabert (the admiral under whom the young Saint-Remi had recently served, and who had interested himself a

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 47.

good deal in the young sailor's history) as to the best course to be adopted to get this claim recognised at court. The marquis at once caused a genealogical tree of the family to be drawn up, which he transmitted with the necessary confirmatory documents to his cousin, M. d'Hozier de Sérigny, grand genealogist and judge-at-arms of the nobility of France, that the same might receive the sanction of his authority.<sup>1</sup>

When this was returned to M. de Chabert, accompanied by a certificate of M. d'Hozier's attesting its accuracy, the marquis forwarded the various documents to the proper quarter, and in due course obtained the appointment of a day for the reception of young Saint-Remi by Louis XVI., who had only recently ascended the throne. The youth was introduced to the king as the Baron de Valois by the Marquis de Boulainvilliers, the Marquis de Chabert, the Count de Maurepas, and M. Necker. The king was pleased to recognise the title which the friends of the young Jacques de Saint-Remi had persuaded him to assume, but desirous, it was believed, that this should become extinct in the person of its present possessor, recommended the newly-acknowledged Baron de Valois to devote himself to the service of the church.<sup>2</sup> Jacques respectfully ventured to suggest that his predilections were in favour of the army or the navy. The king thanked the young Saint-Remi for his inclination to serve him, but recommended him again, still more strongly, to dedicate his days to the service of his Maker. "Sire," replied the young man, with a sprinkling of blasphemy which only a Frenchman would have ventured on, "I am serving God when I am serving my king."<sup>3</sup>

The members of the Saint-Remi family had now their several titles awarded them. Jacques, as we have already seen, was henceforth to be styled Baron de Valois; his sister Jeanne was to be known as Mademoiselle de Valois; and Marianne, the poor child who had been left exposed outside Farmer Durand's window-sill, and who was now sent for to Paris, was for the future to be called Mademoiselle de Saint-Remi. But as "fine words butter no

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Roman Catholic ecclesiastics not being permitted to marry, the title of course could not have been transmitted by descent.

<sup>3</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 87.

parsneps," so empty honours will not suffice to keep the pot boiling. It was therefore imperative that the necessary steps should be taken to procure some sort of provision for these destitute off-shoots of the blood-royal of France. It is true the national finances were in a most lamentable condition, still everybody agreed that something must be done, which something finally resolved itself into a pension to each member of the family of Valois of eight hundred livres (francs) equivalent to thirty-two pounds sterling per annum, commencing from December, 1775. In addition to this, through the intervention of M. Necker, the young Baron de Valois had a commission in the navy given him, with a grant of four thousand livres for his outfit, and shortly afterwards received orders to join his ship at Brest.

We have already mentioned that Jeanne, or, as we must now style her, Mademoiselle de Valois, during the period she was toiling as a mantua-maker's apprentice, was subject to frequent attacks of illness. On these occasions it seems an apartment was set apart for her at the Hôtel de Boulainvilliers<sup>1</sup> where every care was bestowed upon her until she was completely restored to health. During the period of her convalescence she was constantly persecuted by the marquis with attentions the object of which it was impossible to mistake. These advances, moreover, were subsequently renewed on every occasion that presented itself; in fact, whenever mademoiselle found herself under the Boulainvilliers' roof; and if we can credit her own statement, more than one daring assault was made by the old reprobate upon her virtue. To rid herself of the marquis's importunities she was forced, she tells us, to complain to his wife, who decided upon taking the necessary steps to remove mademoiselle beyond the sphere of her husband's dangerous influence. She and her sister Marianne were accordingly sent as boarders to the Abbey of Yères, in the neighbourhood of Montgeron, some dozen miles or so from Paris, on the road to Lyons. Here she asserts that for a time she contemplated taking the veil, a resolution, however, which, if ever seriously entertained, was very soon abandoned.

About this time the Marquis de Boulainvilliers was detected

<sup>1</sup> Now the Messageries in the Rue Notre Dame des Victoires.



defrauding the excise by means of an extensive secret distillery which he carried on in some vaults beneath his Paris hôtel. The discovery of this fraud caused, as might be supposed, considerable sensation among the *haute noblesse*, and neither the marquis nor the marchioness dared show themselves at court, and hardly even in the vicinity of the capital. They decided, therefore, to retire for a time to their château at Montgeron, no great distance from the Abbey of Yéres, and, as a matter of course, the sisters Valois were invited to spend the holidays with them. At the château they would probably have continued to remain had not the marquis renewed his system of persecution. It is, however, tolerably certain that something very like encouragement was given to him by Mademoiselle de Valois, for the pair were surprised one day in a somewhat equivocal situation by the Marquis de Brancas and the Abbé Tacher, and although the lady in her "Memoirs" has the effrontery to speak of "the blush of conscious innocence which coloured her cheek" on this occasion, the result was that she was packed off by the marchioness to the well-known Abbey of Longchamp near Paris—of course, as she says, at her own earnest entreaty. Of this once handsome pile of conventual buildings, all that has survived the fury of the revolutionists of 1793, is a round ivy-mantled tower and an adjacent windmill, both familiar objects at the present time in this favourite locality. In the days of St. Vincent de Paul, the disorders which reigned in the Abbey of Longchamp were such as to call forth severe animadversions from this earnest and conscientious priest,<sup>1</sup> and even when the sisters Valois

<sup>1</sup> "Never was there a more aristocratic, or, if the *chronique scandaleuse* is to be believed, a naughtier nunnery than that of Longchamp. It was Rabelais' Abbey of Thélèma, with additions and emendations, and 'Fay ce que voudras' might have been written over the conventual gates. The excellent St. Vincent de Paul was in a terrible way about the 'goings-on' among these exceptionally vivacious nuns, and in a letter to Cardinal Mazarin indignantly denounced the irregularities which had become habitual in the establishment. The Archbishop of Paris remonstrated with the naughty nuns; but they snapped their fingers metaphorically in the archiepiscopal face, and continued their fandangos. But they were eventually punished for their peccadillos. The pious world ceased in disgust to make pilgrimages to the tomb of Ste. Isabelle de Longchamp, and to deposit rich offerings on her shrine. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the convent had grown comparatively poor, when, in 1727, a renowned opera-singer, Made-

entered it as boarders, the discipline was inclined to be lax ; nevertheless the marquis made so many morning calls that the other boarders were scandalised at his constant visits, and the abbess was constrained to give orders that no gentleman should be allowed to visit Mademoiselle de Valois on any pretence whatever. At this abbey the sisters remained for about a year, only quitting it, say they, on the death of the abbess. Other accounts state that they left the convent surreptitiously early one morning, carrying with them a very light bundle, and with thirty-six francs jingling in their pockets, their departure being due to the pertinacity of the abbess in pressing them to embrace a religious life, a course to which the young ladies, who were by this time sufficiently partial to worldly vanities, were by no means inclined.<sup>1</sup> The abbess is supposed to have received her instructions from high quarters, and it is further suggested that the object of them was the gradual extinction of the race of the Valois, together with all their troublesome claims.

moiselle le Maure, having taken the veil at Longchamp, the happy thought occurred to the abbess of giving concerts of sacred music on the three last days of Lent. These concerts were a prodigious success. The Parisian world, fashionable and frivolous as well as devout, flocked, as fast as their coaches-and-six could carry them, to hear the Longchamp oratorios ; and these concerts remained in vogue for nearly fifty years. It came at last to the ears of another Archbishop of Paris, Monsigneur Christophe de Beaumont—a prelate celebrated for his enmity to theatrical entertainments, and his quarrel with Jean Jacques Rousseau—that the attractions of the choir at the Abbey of Longchamp were enhanced by the voices of a number of artistes from the opera who had *not* taken the veil. So the church was closed to the public. There was an end of the cause, but the effect remained.

“Out of the fashionable pilgrimages grew the world-famous Promenade de Longchamp, which began in the Champs Élysées, and wound its course right athwart the Bois de Boulogne to the gates of the Abbey itself. It was found that the setting-in of the spring fashions might be fitly made to coincide with the eve of Easter ; and every year during three days in Passion-week there was an incessant cavalcade of princes, nobles, bankers, *fermiers-généraux*, strangers of distinction, and the ladies then known as *ruineuses*, to Longchamp. It became not a Ladies’ Mile, but a Ladies’ League. The equipages of the grandest dames of the Court of Versailles locked wheels with the chariots of La Duthé and La Guimard ; and the legends whisper that the *ruineuses* made, as a rule, a much more splendid appearance than the *grandes dames* did.”—“Paris Herself Again,” by George Augustus Sala, vol. ii. p. 253, *et seq.*

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoires du Comte Beugnot,” vol. i. p. 9.

## IV.

1773-1778.

## THE DIAMOND NECKLACE : ORDERED, BUT NOT SOLD.

WHILE our heroine was being initiated into the mysteries of mantua-making by the most distinguished of Parisian *modistes*, the "chains of her dishonour," as she styles them, were unknown to her being forged in the form of a Diamond Necklace, such as the world never saw before, and the like of which it can hardly hope to look upon again. Here is a description, penned by a master-hand, of this regal jewel, this unique gem, long an object of desire with queens and women, which caused a nine months' convulsion of the world of Paris, and the remarkable story connected with which was for a time the talk of every city in Europe, while the mystery enveloping it is thought by many to be hardly cleared up even now. "A row of seventeen glorious diamonds, as large almost as filberts, encircle, not too tightly, the neck a first time. Looser, gracefully fastened thrice to these, a three-wreathed festoon and pendants enough (simple pear-shaped multiple star-shaped or clustering amorphous) encircle it, enwreath it a second time. Loosest of all, softly flowing round from behind in priceless catenary, rush down two broad threefold rows; seem to knot themselves, round a very queen of diamonds, on the bosom; then rush on, again separated, as if there were length in plenty: the very tassels of them were a fortune for some men. And now, lastly, two other inexpressible threefold rows, also with their tassels, will, when the Necklace is on and clasped, unite themselves behind into a doubly inexpressible sixfold row; and so stream down, together or asunder, over the hind neck,—we may fancy like lambent zodiacal or Aurora-Borealis fire."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Extract from the Countess's Life on page xvi. of the present volume.

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle's "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays," vol. iv. p. 9. See also Appendix to the present work for a more minute and technical description of the famous Necklace.



This matchless jewel had its origin in a freak of Louis XV., the "Well-Beloved," as he was endearingly called at the early part of his reign, whose infatuation in later years for the notorious Countess Dubarry led him into all kinds of extravagance, and caused him to dissipate with more than his accustomed recklessness the already seriously impaired revenues of the State. We learn from the Abbé Soulavie that, during the last sixteen months of the "Well-Beloved's" reign, the sum of two million four hundred and fifty thousand francs, or nearly one hundred thousand pounds sterling—a far larger sum in those days, be it remembered, than at the present time—was paid out of the royal exchequer in hard cash to this one favourite alone. And to satisfy us that his statement is accurate, the abbé furnishes us with his authority, and gives the details of the eight several instalments of which the grand total is composed.<sup>1</sup> This, it should be borne in mind, was entirely independent of all manner of royal grants and gifts of places and houses and lands, which had been flung, whenever asked for, into the lap of this frail beauty. Startling as this example of royal prodigality in the days of the decadence of the French monarchy may appear, it is nevertheless indisputable that the infatuated libertine who then controlled the destinies of France, by no means wanted the will to indulge in still wilder schemes of extravagance. For instance, on one occasion, whilst visiting with his architect the costly pavilion of Louveciennes, lately erected for Madame Dubarry, he expressed his regret that he could not present her with a palace constructed entirely of gold and precious stones. Unable to realize this extravagant whim, he resolved to bestow upon his mistress the most costly set of diamonds which could be collected throughout Europe. The result was the world-renowned Diamond Necklace.<sup>2</sup>

Louis XV. gave the commission to the crown jewellers, Böhmer and Bassenge<sup>3</sup> who entered heart and soul into the undertaking.

<sup>1</sup> "Histoire de la Décadence de la Monarchie Française," par l'Abbé Soulavie, vol. iii. p. 330.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires Historiques et Politiques du règne de Louis XVI." par l'Abbe Soulavie, vol. iii. p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> Misspelt "Bassange" in all the Mémoires both written and printed, and in most of the official records of the "Affaire du Collier." Such, however, of the

The execution of so rare an order was of course an affair of time. Not only had the jewellers to raise funds to enable them to secure the largest and finest diamonds that were in the market, but they had to hunt out and employ the most skilful lapidaries to fashion them to their several shapes. Every important city in Europe, and others far more remote, were ransacked to collect these matchless gems. Some of the finest were met with in Germany, others in Spain, others again in Russia, a few in Brazil, and a very fine one indeed was picked up in the city of Hamburg. "But," says Carlyle, "to tell the various histories of these various diamonds, from the first making of them, or even omitting all the rest, from the first digging of them in far Indian mines . . . . How they served as eyes of heathen idols, and received worship; how they had then by fortune of war, or theft, been knocked out, and exchanged among camp-sutlers for a little spirituous liquor, and bought by Jews; and worn as signets on the fingers of tawny or white majesties; and again been lost, with the fingers too, and perhaps life (as by Charles the Rash among the mud ditches of Nancy), in old forgotten glorious victories; and so through innumerable varieties of fortune had come at last to the cutting-wheel of Böhmer, to be united in strange fellowship with comrades also blown together from all ends of the earth, each with a history of its own. Could these aged stones—the youngest of them six thousand years of age and upwards—but have spoken, there were an experience for philosophy to teach by.

latter, as were signed by the individual in question, are invariably signed "Bassenge." There is some doubt as to whether Böhmer and Bassenge were crown jewellers at this period. One or two contemporary writers who are regarded as authorities say they were; but the writer of the letters published under the title of "*Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette, la Cour et la Ville,*" says (vol. i. p. 548) that Böhmer was jeweller to Stanislaus, king of Poland, Louis XV.'s father-in-law, and also to Madame Dubarry, and that it was owing to his holding this latter appointment that the order for the Diamond Necklace was confided to him. The same writer asserts that it was not until early in the year 1785, shortly after the perpetration of the Necklace fraud, that Böhmer was appointed, through the instrumentality of Marie-Antoinette, jeweller to the French crown. Although Böhmer may not have been officially appointed until this date, it is quite certain he had been employed by the queen almost from the very moment she ascended the throne of France.



But now, as was said, by little caps of gold and daintiest rings of the same, they are all being, so to speak, enlisted under Böhmer's flag,—made to take rank and file in new order, no jewel asking his neighbour whence he came ; and parade there for a season. For a season only, and then to disperse and enlist anew *ad infinitum*.”<sup>1</sup>

For many of their purchases credit was obtained by the crown jewellers for a limited period ; for others, when they had exhausted their own capital, they were obliged to have recourse to their friends. But they were full of confidence, for two millions of livres (francs)—eighty thousand pounds sterling—was the sum fixed to be paid by the king for this jewel beyond price. The work went bravely on at the Böhmer and Bassenge establishment, “*Au Grand Balcon*,” Rue Vendôme. The jewellers, their friends, their working lapidaries, their trustful creditors, were all in the highest spirits, when suddenly evil tidings cast dismay into the Böhmer and Bassenge camp. One day comes the intelligence that the king is ill ; three days afterwards the news arrives that he is in danger ; another week brings the report that he is dead, and the late favourite for whom the rich ornament was destined banished for ever beyond the precincts of the court.

Alas ! what was to be done now with the magnificent bauble commissioned by one who, at the time, spite of all his low grovelling debauchery, was nevertheless a king, but is now only so much corruption ? Böhmer and Bassenge, crown jewellers, find themselves deeply involved ; their creditors become clamorous, for their bills as they fall due are returned protested. They have nothing to fall back upon but the Diamond Necklace, which is worth, or at any rate valued at, two million livres. But where is a purchaser to be found for it ? Böhmer and Bassenge, crown jewellers though they be, must still pay their debts. Kings, according to a certain fiction of state, never die—“*Le Roi est Mort ! Vive le Roi !*” Böhmer and Bassenge, however, learn by sad experience not only that kings do die, but that creditors, alas, do not.

What is to be done ? Only one course suggests itself. A young and lovely queen has just ascended the throne. Will it not be possible to induce her to become the purchaser of this unrivalled

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle's “Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,” vol. iv. p. 8.

specimen of *bijouterie*? The office of crown jeweller carries with it the privilege of *entrée* to the presence of royalty at all times and seasons; while "other jewellers, and even innumerable gentlemen and small nobility, languish in the vestibule. With the costliest ornaments in his pockets, or borne after him by assiduous shop-boys, the happy Böhmer sees high drawing-rooms and sacred *ruelles* fly open as with talismanic *sesame*, and the brightest eyes of the whole world grow brighter: to him alone of all men the Unapproachable reveals herself in mysterious *négligée*, taking and giving counsel."<sup>1</sup>

It was to Versailles that Böhmer betook himself, carrying with him the Diamond Necklace in its case of richest velvet, and ere many hours have elapsed he is displaying its matchless variegated brilliancy—its "flashes of star-rainbow colours" to the admiring gaze of the beauteous Marie-Antoinette, then just twenty years of age, of a gay and lively disposition, verging, some say, on to giddiness, yet perfectly innocent; fond of pleasure, and, like other fair young creatures in this world, not indifferent to those personal ornaments which help to enhance the charms which Nature has bestowed upon them with so liberal a hand. Still, pleased as she was with the gem, she nevertheless felt that the times were unpropitious; or else she scorned, may be, to wear an ornament, however beautiful, the original destination of which was, to say the least of it, unfortunate. But be this as it may, one thing is quite certain, the purchase of the Necklace was declined.

Thus in a moment, as it were, all those fond hopes with which the crown jewellers had buoyed themselves up for many months past were dissipated, and they were again constrained to ask each other, "what is now to be done?" Poor men, they were not to blame, for how could they have foreseen that their royal customer, full of health in November, 1773, when he gave the order, should be dead of small-pox on the 10th of May following? After several days spent in deliberation the partners decided that a drawing of the Necklace should be made and an engraving executed, and that printed copies of this should be sent to all the courts of Europe, to see whether a customer could not be obtained for a jewel which, ransack the entire world through, would be found without its equal.

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle's "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays," vol. iv. p. 6.

This scheme, however, clever as it was, proved abortive ; for what kind of idea could the cunningest graver and the most liquescent of printing inks possibly give of brilliants of the very finest water ? The jewellers next resolved that one of the firm—Bassenge being the younger and more active was eventually fixed upon—should devote himself to travelling over Europe, and to visiting the various courts, where he might personally solicit the different empresses, queens, princesses, landgravines, margravines, electresses, infantas, and grand and arch-duchesses, to purchase this costly jewel, which only a neck flushing with the blood of royalty was worthy to wear. During this time Böhmer was to remain in Paris, to avail himself of any opportunity that might offer for reopening negotiations with Marie-Antoinette. One circumstance, however, rendered the prospect of success doubtful. The queen had become indebted to the crown jewellers in the sum of 348,000 livres (francs), for a pair of diamond earrings, of which amount she had herself only been able to pay some 48,000 livres,<sup>1</sup> leaving 300,000 livres still due.

In this way several years went by. Shortly after the birth of Madame Royale, the Necklace was again offered to the queen, but although the reduced price of one million eight hundred thousand livres was named for it, there was a more serious obstacle than ever in the way of its purchase. France was at this period engaged in a war with England on behalf of the American Colonists, and her navy was in a most crippled condition. No sooner did the crown jeweller name the subject of the Necklace, than Marie-Antoinette interrupted him with this queen-like remark, "Monsieur, we have more need of men-of-war now than of diamonds."<sup>2</sup> What reply could a crown jeweller make to so pertinent an observation as this ? All he could do was to feel affronted, and hastily making his obeisances, he flung himself into the corner of his carriage, and set off down the long Avenue de Paris on his return to the Rue Vendôme in no very amiable mood.

<sup>1</sup> In the *livre rouge* of Louis XVI., under the date December, 1776, there is an entry, in the king's own hand, "Given to the queen 25,000 livres, the first payment of a sum of 300,000 livres which I have engaged to pay with interest to Böhmer in six years."—See Archives of the Republic.

<sup>2</sup> "Correspondance Secrète de la Cour de Louis XVI."



## V.

1779-1780.

## AT BAR-SUR-AUBE.—COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE.

WHILE Monsieur Bassenge Calaphibus-like is wandering up and down Europe trying to dispose of the ill-fated Diamond Necklace, let us see what our heroine is doing now that she has freed herself from the restraints of a conventual life in order to launch forth into the great world with no one to direct, no one to control her. On leaving the abbey of Longchamp the two sisters decided upon making their way to Bar-sur-Aube, and embarked on board one of the Seine barges plying between Paris and Nogent, from which latter place they proceeded up the river Aube to their destination.<sup>1</sup> The youngest sister, it seems, was possessed with a certain longing to return to the place of her birth. Whether this arose from a feeling of vanity, a desire to show off before the simple rustics of Fontette, or whether love was the actuating principle—for she had left a sweetheart behind her when she was summoned to Paris—is more than we can tell. Arrived at Bar-sur-Aube, our heroine informs us that she and her sister at once entered a convent, where many visitors called upon them, and invited them to a round of entertainments at which every one present vied with his neighbour as to who should pay them the greatest amount of attention. She even asserts that they received invitations from the different noble families in the neighbourhood, and, in pursuance of these, entered upon a series of visits varying from a few days to a week in extent. When these visits were over, we are told that a Madame de Suremont enticed them to board at her house, where they were “very elegantly entertained” for four hundred livres (sixteen pounds) per annum.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoires du Comte Beugnot,” vol. i. p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> “Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself,” vol. i. p. 146, *et seq.*

Other accounts, which we believe to be more trustworthy, assert that the sisters arrived at Bar-sur-Aube with merely a few livres in their pockets, and a single change of linen beyond the clothes they had on, and that, instead of entering a convent, they put up at a miserable little inn called "*La Tête Rouge*," where they made good their footing by their high titles and the claims they set up to the manors of Essoyes, Fontette, and Verpilière, in the neighbourhood. The great expectations they announced soon became generally known in a small country town, and the consequence was that the good people round about flocked to see them out of curiosity, and it was then that Madame de Suremont, touched by their distress, offered the fugitives the use of her house for a few days until they could manage to provide some other lodging for themselves.

On retiring for the night their hostess, a very stout lady, kindly lent them two of her own dresses to wear, observing, however, that she was afraid they would be too large to fit them. What was Madame de Suremont's astonishment to see her young guests enter the sitting-room the following morning with the dresses, which they had spent the night in cutting and adapting to their own slim figures, fitting them to perfection! Instead, too, of stopping merely a week at this hospitable house, according to the terms of their invitation, the Demoiselles de Valois managed to remain in it for twelve months, flirting with all the young fellows who visited there, and exhibiting more levity and freedom than was becoming to their sex.<sup>1</sup> The ladies, naturally enough, all shrank aghast from this bold behaviour, but the gentlemen were more or less amused at it.

In due course several of these young fellows became smitten with our heroine, and amongst those who contested for the honour of her smiles were two who stood out in advance of the rest. One was M. Beugnot, the writer of the Memoirs we have been quoting, and son of a well-to-do citizen of Bar-sur-Aube. The latter, however, was so alarmed at the mere idea of having Mademoiselle de Valois for a daughter-in-law that he packed off his son to Paris to study law, politics, and human nature, which he did to such good pur-

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. p. 10, *et seq.*

pose as to escape the guillotine, and get created a councillor of state and a count by Napoleon, by whom he was appointed administrator of one of the Rhine provinces. At the Restoration he was named *ad interim* minister of the interior, then minister of police, next minister of marine, afterwards postmaster-general, and finally director-general of the administration of finances ; and was altogether so eager a place-hunter, that a pamphleteer of the time said of him that he would have hired himself out to the plague if the plague only gave pensions. The other was M. de la Motte, a nephew of Madame de Suremont's, and son of a chevalier of St.-Louis killed at the battle of Minden. This young gentleman, an officer, or as Madame Campan and the Abbé Georgel say, a private in the *gendarmérie*, and destitute of any fortune whatever, had already managed to involve himself deeply in debt. Previous to the Revolution the *gendarmérie*, very different from the force now known by that name, was the first cavalry regiment in France, and the usual refuge for young men of good family but poor estate.

Let us hear what the lady herself has to say respecting this young man (who had only his sword with which to cut his way to fortune), and his pretensions to be considered the accepted suitor of a descendant of the royal house of Valois.

"Amongst many other species of amusement, we frequently performed comedies, in one of which I engaged to take a part. M. de la Motte, an officer in the gendarmes, and nephew of Madame de Suremont, being on a visit to Bar-sur-Aube, acquired great reputation for his performance, and became remarked for his assiduity and attention to please. The part of a valet was assigned to him, and that of a waiting-maid to me. We divided the applause of the company, for having, as they pleased to express, sustained our characters with so much propriety.

"From the moment of our first interview M. de la Motte paid me very pointed attention. He eagerly seized every opportunity of showing me how solicitous he was to please. His compliments were not glaring, but of that delicate nature which could only proceed from the genuine dictates of an honest heart. Elegant in person and manners, and insinuating in address, the honourable intention which he manifested could not prove disagreeable to



me. I listened, and, as I believe, is generally the consequence where any of our sex listen to the persuasions of youth, elegance, and accomplishments in the other, I was soon not far from loving him.

“Madame de Suremont perceived the growing attachment of her nephew, and afforded him every opportunity of urging his suit. She frequently left us together when the company were gone, engaging M. de la Motte to remain and write out my parts, and give me instructions in acting them.

“I will ingenuously confess that I loved M. de la Motte. He possessed a sincerity of heart, seldom to be found excepting in the country, blended with those polished manners which mark the *habitué* of the metropolis. He seized every opportunity of rendering himself agreeable, and I had every reason to suppose he entertained favourable sentiments towards me, at least I wished so, and the gradation is so natural that it will not appear strange if I believed it.

“M. de la Motte, I had remarked for some days, appeared thoughtful and melancholy; but as he had never communicated to me the cause, though I was uneasy at the effect of it, I forebore to make inquiry. He advised me to go to Paris to see my brother, and to make known his pretensions to Madame de Boulainvilliers, my worthy mother, and endeavour to obtain her consent to our union. Fearful that breaking this matter suddenly to the marchioness, after having carried it on so far without her knowledge, might give her offence, I hesitated some time ere I could form a resolution to acquaint her; but, trusting to her goodness, I at length yielded to M. de la Motte’s arguments in favour of a determination which was also consonant to the dictates of my own heart.

“When I had resolved on a journey to Paris, which highly gratified M. de la Motte, I at once wrote a letter to Madame de Boulainvilliers, informing her that having heard of my brother’s arrival, and being anxious to see him, I should be at Paris the Saturday following by eight o’clock. The interval was occupied by M. de la Motte in giving me directions for my behaviour, and earnestly pressing me to return as soon as possible, and complete his happiness by the celebration of our nuptials. Not a single person in the house,



not even my sister, was acquainted with what was in agitation. The attentions of M. de la Motte had long been observed, but our marriage was whispered of only as a conjecture.

“On the Wednesday following, about three in the morning, I set off in the diligence, and after a very tedious and disagreeable journey, over roads which at once prove the neglect of the government and the patience of the people, I arrived near Paris, and found Julia, the marchioness’s first woman, waiting with a coach at the Porte Saint-Antoine. I was not a little pleased at being so near the end of my journey, and felt no regret at quitting my disagreeable vehicle for the one which conveyed me to the Hôtel de Boulainvilliers.

“I was impatient to see my brother, but I was disappointed ; he had received orders to join his squadron at Brest. Madame de Boulainvilliers received me with that cordiality and affection with which the tenderest of mothers would receive her daughter after a long absence. She told me that my brother would not have written to inform me of his arrival if it could have been foreseen how soon he was to depart. This information gave me much uneasiness, which Madame de Boulainvilliers used the utmost assiduity to dissipate.

“The evening was occupied by many questions which the marchioness asked me relative to Bar-sur-Aube, concerning our reception and the diversions and entertainments of the place. I took advantage of this opportunity to mention the comedy. I perceived, from a sign she made to Madame de Tonneres, her daughter, that she had some private correspondent in that place, who had informed her of more than I knew, and that the information I had to give was by no means novel. This surprised me not a little.

“A day or two after they resumed the topic, and Madame de Tonneres asked me what character I played. I told her that of a waiting-maid. She seemed surprised that I should choose a part like that, when there were many others for which I was much better adapted. ‘But who,’ said Madame de Boulainvilliers, ‘was the young man who played the part of Jasmin? Is he a young man? Pray how old is he?’ I could not well comprehend the drift of these questions, which, nevertheless, I found myself con-

strained to answer. 'He is a young gentleman,' I replied, 'who has a commission in the gendarmes,' and I then proceeded to give them information respecting his family. 'And what do you think of him?' 'That he has a pleasing address, is much of a gentleman, and has received a very good education; understands music, and dances to perfection: everybody gives him the credit of being a very accomplished young man, and all admit that he played his character like an experienced actor.' Perceiving me growing warm in my encomiums, the marchioness smiled. Her daughter observed it, and they exchanged some very significant glances with each other, and then, to avoid giving me any suspicions, changed the subject of the conversation.

"On another occasion Madame de Tonneres, with whom I was frequently left alone, examined me yet more closely respecting M. de la Motte. 'What!' inquired she, in a tone of raillery, 'did this presumptuous wretch ever aspire to be your husband?' 'Oh, yes! he proposed demanding me in marriage through his mother, at the same time informing me of his fortune and expectations.' 'And what answer did you make, my dear?' 'That I would beg Madame de Boulainvilliers to give her consent,' replied I. 'But did you give no promise of your own accord, and are you really partial to him?' I answered these questions in the affirmative. 'Well, then, my dear,' replied she, 'from your approbation, I will believe him worthy of your love.' 'Then do me the favour,' replied I, 'to represent my affections to my dear mother, at some convenient opportunity when I am not present; and you may, if you please, inform her, at the same time, that M. de la Luzerne, bishop of Langres, can give her every information concerning the family with which he is well acquainted: indeed, he has been requested by the mother of M. de la Motte to demand me in marriage.' The result was that Madame de Tonneres kindly undertook my cause with the marchioness, who, having my happiness at heart, wished me, in a matter which could but once be resolved on, to take time for deliberation.

"Though Madame de Boulainvilliers seemed rather to dissuade me from my purpose than consent to its accomplishment, she nevertheless consented to write to the Bishop of Langres, who the very next evening paid her a visit. As soon as he arrived I made

my obedience and retired, leaving him and the marchioness to their private conference.

"I was in no small state of anxiety to learn the result of a negotiation to me of such importance, yet was at a loss of whom to inquire. The next morning I was relieved from suspense, for I received a letter from the reverend prelate, informing me of their conversation the evening before. He gave me some hopes of obtaining the consent of the marchioness, and this was all; as for the marquis, I learnt that he positively refused his consent to the match.

"In a few days I departed for Bar-sur-Aube: my regret at parting with the marchioness was increased by my having to return home without obtaining her consent to our marriage, which, though this had been the express object of my journey, I could not consistently with delicacy or duty press any further, lest I should appear too precipitately to reject the prudent advice which she had given me.

"My return to Bar-sur-Aube was much more agreeable than my journey to Paris. I had written to my sister and M. de la Motte to apprise them of it, and was met by them about two leagues from Bar-sur-Aube, at a beautiful seat, the residence of M. de la Motte's mother.

"The news of my departure, and the object of my journey, had transpired and spread through the village; every one spoke of my marriage with M. de la Motte. It was whispered that Mademoiselle de Valois had returned with the consent of her brother and Madame de Boulainvilliers to solemnize this marriage; all welcomed me with as much pleasure as if, instead of a week, I had been absent a year.

"M. de la Motte received me with heartfelt satisfaction, but his countenance seemed to speak a degree of anxiety; he feared that it was the intention of Madame de Boulainvilliers to have married me to some other husband, and trembled for the success of my embassy: he read in my looks that all was not as it should be, while the words which dropped from Madame de Boulainvilliers made me doubtful whether I should be able to obtain her consent. The uneasiness which on this account overspread my countenance was intelligible only to M. de la Motte, by whose advice I was prevailed



upon to take the only steps prudence dictated in so delicate and embarrassing a position.

"My pen was the instrument by which I disclosed a secret my timidity could never suffer my tongue to discover; I immediately wrote to Madame de Boulainvilliers three successive letters, entreating her to compassionate my distress, and to let her consent grace our union. I also wrote to the Bishop of Langres, asking that worthy prelate, who before had done me signal service, to intercede with the marchioness in my behalf. The intercession of the bishop I was confident would have its due weight, and indeed it at length produced that consent so essential to my future happiness.

"The approbation of Madame de Boulainvilliers having now given a sanction to our proceedings, an early day was appointed, by the advice of the friends of M. de la Motte, for the celebration of our nuptials, which took place, according to the custom of the province, at midnight on the 6th of June, 1780.

"The day after our marriage a grand dinner was given by Madame de Suremont. The entertainment was profusely elegant. There were two tables, one in the antechamber, and the other in the dining-room. Every apartment was open and very soon crowded; the health of the bride was an apology for drinking wine as though it had been water. When the company quitted the table, all were desirous to salute and wish me joy. The remainder of the day was spent in dancing.

"The banns of marriage had been published at Fontette, which made the peasants of that place curious to know the day. They came in great numbers to Bar-sur-Aube, with the intention of witnessing the ceremony, and remained there some days. Amongst them was a young peasant, a comely young fellow, who came to Madame de Suremont and inquired bluntly for Mademoiselle Filliette, a name by which my sister had formerly been known in the country. 'I know no such person,' replied she: 'whom do you mean by Mademoiselle Filliette?' 'Why, madame,' replied the clown, 'the sister of mademoiselle who is just married. Please tell her I am Colas, of Fontette; she will recollect me.'

"Madame de Suremont communicated this to my sister, who, out of compassion for the unfortunate rustic, refused to see him lest

such an interview should make him more unhappy. Durand, indeed, to detain my sister in the country, had promised her in marriage to this peasant, whose appearance was greatly in his favour, but the recognition of her birth by the people in the neighbourhood had kindled in the bosom of Marianne hopes of an alliance more consonant to her ideas, more consistent with her present station. Far from despising this poor creature, she wished to avoid giving him pain. She begged me, therefore, to speak to him: I did so. 'Good day, my dear friend,' said I, 'what are your commands for my sister?' 'I wish, madame,' replied he, 'to have the honour of paying my respects to her. She is of the same age, we have stood sponsors together, and M. Durand, her godfather, promised me that I should marry her. But her fortune is changed; she is now Mademoiselle de Valois; and I am not quite such a fool as to think that she will have me for her husband, as she is descended from the blood-royal; but I wish to have the pleasure of seeing her in her fine clothes, for I am sure,' continued he, bursting into tears, 'she is very handsome!'<sup>1</sup> I could not help shedding a tear of pity for this honest rustic. His grief, however, was not to be alleviated; the presence of my sister would but have increased his misery; at least she thought so, and could not be prevailed upon to see him. Finding himself without hope, he went home again, murmuring at what he termed the false-heartedness of his mistress.

"Some few days after I accompanied my sister to Fontette, where, it being Sunday, we went to mass. All the peasants rose from their seats at our entrance, and desired the curate should do us honour, as the children of the Baron de Saint-Remi their late lord. We received the holy water and the consecrated bread in the seat of honour; the bells were rung, and every one testified their joy on our arrival. They crowded about the house where we were staying; we ordered them six livres a-piece, for which they testified their gratitude by drinking our healths, and the health of the Baron de Saint-Remi de Valois, and his safe return. They then conducted me to the mansion of my ancestors, and round the grounds of the patrimonial estate. This mansion, this noble estate,

<sup>1</sup> M. Beugnot says Mademoiselle de Saint-Remi was a fat, handsome girl, extremely fair, and very dull and stupid, with just sufficient instinct to divine that she was a great lady.



thought I to myself, might have been possessed by the descendants of those who acquired it by valour,<sup>1</sup> and enjoyed it with hospitality. I lamented the ravages of luxury: I thought of the credulity and easy temper of my father, who sacrificed everything to the extravagance of his wife. Had it not been for these he might have sustained the dignity of his ancestors, and his miserable offspring have maintained that position to which they were by birth entitled.”<sup>2</sup>

To provide herself with a suitable *trousseau*, Mademoiselle de Valois had been obliged to raise one thousand livres on a mortgage of her pension for two years; while, to defray the expenses incident to the wedding, M. de la Motte, on his part, sold for six hundred livres a horse and cabriolet which he had only bought a short time previously on credit at Lunéville, where his corps was doing garrison duty.<sup>3</sup>

We will close this chapter with a pair of portraits of Monsieur and Madame de la Motte, which their friend Beugnot has sketched for our benefit. “M. de la Motte,” observes his rival, “was an ugly man, but well made and skilled in all bodily exercises, whilst, despite his ugliness, the expression of his face was amiable and mild. He did not exactly lack talent, still what he possessed was frittered away on trifles. Destitute of all fortune, he was clever enough to get head over ears in debt, and only lived by his wits and on the trifling allowance of three hundred francs a year which his uncle, M. de Suremont, was obliged to make him to enable him to retain his position in the gendarmerie.”

With regard to Madame de la Motte, Beugnot says: “She was not exactly handsome, was short in stature, slender, and well formed. Her blue eyes were full of expression and over-arched with black eyebrows; her face rather long; her mouth wide, but adorned with fine teeth, and, what is the greatest attraction in such a face

<sup>1</sup> Acquired it rather by the accident of being born bastard offspring of a king.

<sup>2</sup> “Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself,” vol. i. p. 151, *et seq.* The reader must take this glowing description of the wedding and what transpired subsequently at Fontette, subject to large allowances for Madame de la Motte’s habitual exaggeration, to make use of no stronger term.

<sup>3</sup> “Mémoires du Comte Beugnot,” vol. i. p. 16.

as hers, her smile was enchanting. She had a pretty hand, a very small foot, and a complexion of dazzling whiteness. When she spoke her mind exhibited no sign of acquired knowledge, but she had much natural intelligence, and a quick and penetrating understanding. Engaged in a perpetual conflict with society from the time of her birth, she had learned to disdain its laws, and had but little respect for those of morality."

M. Beugnot adds the following anecdote :

"When I returned home that evening my father mentioned to me that fifteen or twenty years previously, whenever he went to collect his rents in the parish of Essoyes, the curé of Fontette never failed to tax his purse for the poor children of Jacques de Saint-Remi, who were huddled together in a dilapidated hovel with a trap-hole in front, through which soup, vegetables, broken victuals, and other charitable doles were passed by the neighbours." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. pp. 11-14.

## VI.

1780-1782.

COUNTESS DE LA MOTTE.—IN BARRACKS AT LUNÉVILLE.—ON A FIFTH FLOOR IN PARIS.—ENSNARES THE GRAND ALMONER.

FROM the day of her marriage, in the summer of 1780, our heroine assumed the title of Countess de Valois de la Motte, though on ordinary occasions she dropped the former portion of it, retaining only the name of De la Motte, by which she afterwards became so notorious. The wedding did not take place a day too soon, for in the course of the same or following month the countess gave birth to male twins, that died a few days afterwards. Thereupon Madame de Suremont, glad of an excuse for getting rid of her new relation—the old lady used to say to Beugnot that “the most unhappy year of her life was the one she spent in the society of this demon,”—turned the newly-married couple out of her house.<sup>1</sup> They took refuge for a time with Madame de la Tour, a married sister of the count’s—the young gendarme following the example of his wife, had likewise assumed a title—but were finally obliged to rely on

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoires du Comte Beugnot,” vol. i. p. 13. Rétaux de Villette, one of the countess’s many lovers, and of whom we shall by-and-by have occasion to speak, professes to have heard the story of the countess’s numerous *liaisons* from her own lips. He says that the reprobate Marquis de Boulainvilliers succeeded in seducing both the countess and her sister, and that the former was moreover *enceinte* by the Bishop of Langres at the time of her marriage with M. de la Motte, which is the reason why this “worthy prelate,” as the countess styles him, interested himself in hastening forward the ceremony. This may seem a startling statement, but those who are aware of the extreme immorality which pervaded the upper classes of French society at this period, and especially the clerical section of it, will have no difficulty in believing it. If such things were done in the green wood, what might we not look for in the dry?—See “Mémoire Historique des Intrigues de la Cour,” etc., par Rétaux de Villette, p. 4, *et seq.*, also *post*, p. 35.

their own resources, which, as may be supposed, were of the narrowest. De la Motte himself had nothing but his sword, and the countess had not even her scanty pension to depend upon. Now commenced with them that life of shifts and expedients, which is certain in the long run to disappoint those who are unhappily reduced to enter upon it, which subverts the principles, destroys the best habits of even the firmest characters, and too frequently culminates in crime. By borrowing money from friends and neighbours so long as they were disposed to lend it, by occasional loans from money-lenders at exorbitant rates of interest, by running into debt with the tradespeople, and by certain small bounties received from Paris, to assist the descendants of Henri II., in answer to supplicatory letters written by the countess, the newly-married couple dragged on as best they could.

The count's leave of absence having at length expired, he was summoned back to garrison duty at Lunéville, a dull, decaying, fortified town, composed of straight streets and regular buildings, where in subsequent years the treaty of peace was signed between France and Austria which gave to the former the coveted frontier of the Rhine. The palace built by Philip, duke of Lorraine, grandfather of Marie-Antoinette, was then, as now, a *caserne de cavalerie*, and it was to this barrack that Count de la Motte took his wife to share with him his incommodious quarters. Here madame's "lively complexion" and "excess of vivacity," as she styles them, were not long in exercising their sway over the more susceptible of her husband's comrades. In September of the following year the count and his wife had determined upon proceeding to Paris to urge the Marchioness de Boulainvilliers to interest herself in their behalf, a project which was knocked on the head by the count's commanding officer, the Marquis d'Autichamp,—whose too familiar intimacy with Madame de la Motte was the talk not merely of the corps, but of the town,<sup>1</sup> and who had himself contemplated escorting madame on her journey to the capital,—peremptorily refusing the count any further leave of absence. Just at

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire Historique des Intrigues de la Cour," etc., par Rétaux de Villette, p. 5. Villette was in the same corps as Count de la Motte, and on duty at Lunéville at the time we are speaking of.



this time intelligence reaches the De la Mottes that the Marquis and Marchioness de Boulainvilliers are at Strasbourg, only some threescore miles or so away. Commanding-officer d'Autichamp, we suppose, relents ; for the count gets a few days' leave, and to Strasbourg the pair hasten as fast as a French diligence of the eighteenth century will carry them, which is, however, not fast enough, for on their arrival they learn from the great charlatan of the age, Count Cagliostro, who just then happens to be showing off in the capital of Alsace, that the Marquis and Marchioness de Boulainvilliers have departed for Cardinal Prince Louis de Rohan's Palace at Saverne. There was nothing else but to give chase, so off the De la Mottes start, and on their arrival in the vicinity of the episcopal château, put up at some little inn, whence the countess writes to Madame de Boulainvilliers, apprising her that she is in the neighbourhood, and asking when she may be permitted to call upon her. The next day she is honoured by a visit from the marquis, who escorts her over to his wife. Some few days afterwards, while the marchioness and madame are taking a carriage drive together, they meet the Cardinal de Rohan, Grand Almoner of France, to whom Madame de Boulainvilliers introduces her *protégée*, and strongly recommends her to this powerful prelate's kindly notice.<sup>1</sup>

On her return home to barrack quarters, if home indeed they could be called, the countess harped, day after day, upon her fancied claims to the three estates that formerly belonged to her family, and no wonder if she at length came to the conclusion that Paris and Versailles, rather than a dull garrison town like Lunéville, were the proper spheres for her enterprise and ambition. To Paris, therefore, she resolved to go ; but, alas ! how was she to obtain the means of defraying the expenses of her journey and of her sojourn in the capital ? Commanding-officer d'Autichamp would willingly escort her there, and pay all travelling expenses, but just then her husband is jealous and cannot be brought to consent. Fortunately for the countess, one of her Bar-sur-Aube friends—the father of the M. Beugnot, of whom we have already spoken—came to the rescue with a loan of one thousand livres, and to her honour it may be recorded, that whenever afterwards she

<sup>1</sup> “Premier Interrogatoire du Cardinal de Rohan.”



spoke of this service she was always much moved, and, what is perhaps more to her credit, during the period of her dishonest prosperity she paid the money, as she paid all the debts she had contracted at Bar-sur-Aube, her adopted home. However corrupt her general character may have been, she was certainly not wanting in gratitude.

This thousand livres she and her husband divided equally between them, and they then set forth in different directions it is true, but still with the same object at heart, namely, to procure the restitution of the Saint-Remi estates. The countess went to Paris to press her claims on the attention of those in power. The count resigned his post in the gendarmerie, never to do, from that hour forward, another day of honest work during the remainder of his long life, and betook himself to Fontette to search for evidence on the spot, and to ascertain the exact nature of the steps requisite to be taken to recover possession of this and the adjacent Saint-Remi domains. Arrived at his destination, he caused a *Te Deum* to be chanted in the church, and, as the congregation were leaving, scattered handfuls of silver among the gaping crowd, who, on experiencing this mark of favour, did not hesitate to hail him as their lord; and lord of Fontette he was by courtesy, so long as his money lasted, which, unfortunately for the rustics of the place, was not long. His last livre dissipated, the count was only too glad to get back again to Bar-sur-Aube to such a home as his sister was able to offer him.<sup>1</sup>

The countess, on her part, so soon as she arrived in Paris, proceeded to set to work. She wrote at once to young Beugnot, who was then prosecuting his legal studies in the capital, informing him that she had a letter for him from his father, and asking him to call upon her. Beugnot lost no time in complying with her request, and found the purport of the letter was to urge him thoroughly to examine the countess's claims to the Fontette, Essoyes, and other estates, and see if there was any real foundation for them. "I took the affair," says Beugnot, "seriously in hand as my father desired me, and readily enough found the letters patent of Henri II. which conferred the domains in question on his natural

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. p. 17, 19.

son, but I could not trace the various deeds diverting the possession of them from the Saint-Remis into the hands of the different proprietors who were in nowise connected with the family. One of the latest of these, a M. Orceau de Fontette, superintendent of Caen, had exchanged the lands held by him with the king. This was a favourable circumstance for us in the prosecution of our claim, as the king had only to forego his hold upon the property to restore to the Saint-Remis one of the possessions of their forefathers.”<sup>1</sup>

The young lawyer now proceeded to compose a “*Mémoire*,” wherein, in true French style, he spoke of his client’s case as “one more insult of fortune to the Valois, the hard lot of a branch detached from that ancient tree which had so long covered with its royal shade France and other European states. I interspersed my composition,” says Beugnot, “with those philosophical reflections then so much in fashion, and asked the Bourbons to pay the natural debt of those from whom they had received so magnificent a heritage. I submitted my composition to M. Elie de Beaumont, a celebrated advocate, and also a man of taste. ‘It is a pity,’ remarked he, ‘that we cannot bring this business before the Parliament; it would make your reputation.’ Alas! I did not even receive for my labour the honours of print. People said it was entirely a matter for the royal favour, and that to print the ‘*Mémoire*’ would be contrary to the respect due to the king.”<sup>2</sup> Beugnot thereupon composed a new “*Mémoire*,” or rather petition to the crown, which was in due course presented, though without producing the result which the sanguine expectations of the countess and her advocate anticipated from it.

Early in November, 1781, either by previous invitation from the marchioness or of her own accord, Madame de la Motte presented herself at the Hôtel de Boulainvilliers, bent upon jogging the marchioness’s memory with reference to a commission in the dragoons which she had made a half promise to obtain for the count, her husband, and intending to say a few words respecting her own claim to the Saint-Remi estates, when, to her surprise and grief, she found her benefactress lying dangerously ill. She re-

<sup>1</sup> “*Mémoires du Comte Beugnot*,” vol. i. p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol. i. p. 20.

mained and tended her until her death, which took place in about three weeks ; yet, strange to say, she was unable to forego her passion for intrigue even at a time like this, for she admits, while the marchioness was lying past hope of recovery, having had a *tête-à-tête* interview with the marquis, on the length of which she was rallied by the gentlemen staying at the hôtel. During this interview the marquis, she tells us, made her "a downright proposal" to the effect that on his wife's death she should reside with him as his mistress, he engaging to procure for her husband a post in some regiment which should "prevent him from troubling them too often." All this she calmly listened to, and when the marchioness was dead still continued to reside under the same roof with the man who had made this disgraceful proposition to her, exposed, as she herself admits, to his daily persecutions. The old reprobate, too, was always upbraiding her, she says, with "loving other men better than him," and openly accused her of carrying on an intrigue beneath his roof with the old Bishop of Langres, who visited her much more frequently than the marquis thought necessary or prudent.

After a while the count, who had been rusticating ever since his Fontette expedition at Bar-sur-Aube, turned up at the Boulainvilliers hôtel to look after his wife, when the marquis, in revenge, as madame says, for the contempt with which she invariably treated him, endeavoured to arouse the jealousy of her husband by accusing her—falsely, of course—with being too intimate with his son-in-law, and of sundry unbecoming familiarities with the count's cousin, who had pawned his watch to defray the expense of a three-days' frolic with the countess at Versailles. However, Count de la Motte, according to his wife, "had too much good sense to give any credit to these insinuations ; he listened attentively, but did not believe a single iota of them."<sup>1</sup>

While the countess was residing under the Boulainvilliers roof she was constantly on the look-out to push her own or her husband's fortunes, and eventually succeeded in talking over the Baron de Crussol, son-in-law of the Marquis de Boulainvilliers, to procure M. de la Motte a post in the Count d'Artois's body-guard. This

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. pp. 189, 191, 204.



necessitated the count's removal to Versailles; so, turning their backs on the Hôtel de Boulainvilliers, where the marquis had for some time past adopted an unpleasant system of retrenchment in order to bring madame to "his way of thinking"—in other words, had placed the descendant of the house of Valois and her tall and hungry spouse on exceedingly short commons—the pair went forth in search of whatever Fortune might please to send them.

From certain hints dropped by the countess it is evident that she had grown disgusted with the avarice and meanness rather than with what she styles the "detested attentions" of the marquis, who, had he only loosened his purse-strings, and dispensed his bounty with a liberal hand, had been looked upon favourably enough, and possibly had been the means of saving Cardinal Prince de Rohan from getting entangled in the countess's toils.

It is not to be supposed that at this epoch of her career Madame de la Motte had forgotten her introduction to this prelate, or that she omitted to remind him of it, and of Madame de Boulainvilliers' recommendation of her to his notice and sympathy. Was he not, in fact, Grand Almoner of France, and, by virtue of his office, dispenser of the king's and a nation's bounties? and humiliating though she might pretend it to be for one who had the blood of the Valois in her veins to have to appeal to the servant of the sovereign instead of to the throne itself, the pill, if a trifle bitter, must nevertheless be swallowed.

Cardinal Prince Louis de Rohan, at this time in his eight-and-fortieth year, is described as a tall, portly, handsome-looking man, with a slightly ruddy complexion, bald forehead, and almost white hair. There was a noble and easy bearing about him,<sup>1</sup> and his manners are said to have been singularly agreeable so long as he kept his temper, of late grown exceedingly choleric, under restraint. He was weak and vain, and credulous to a degree; anything but devout, and mad after women.<sup>2</sup> Unrestricted by his priestly office, he led a notoriously dissolute life, which scandalized even the loose moralists of that loose epoch; still, he was commonly looked upon as a good-enough sort of man so far as little acts of kindness and generosity were concerned, more especially,

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire pour Bette d'Etienneville."

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires de la Baronne d'Oberkirche," vol. i. p. 127.

too, when the suppliant happened to be of the fair sex, and youthful, and a beauty withal. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that he responded favourably to the countess's first and second appeals. This gave her hope ; and, the better to profit by the grand almoner's liberality, and to secure his influence in support of her claims, she took an apartment in Paris during the summer of 1782 within a short distance of his hôtel. It was a poor sort of a lodging, consisting merely of two ill-furnished rooms on the topmost *étage* at the Hôtel de Reims, in the Rue de la Verrerie, a narrow, ill-paved, irregularly-built street—devoted at the present day, not to glass factories or warehouses, as its name would imply, but to grocery, soap, candle and dried fruit stores, and to locksmiths' shops, every one of which hangs out its monster red or golden key by way of sign—running from the Rue des Lombards into the Rue de Bercy, which intersects the Rue Vieille-du-Temple, where the Hôtel de Strasbourg, or Palais-Cardinal, as it was sometimes called, in which for the moment all the countess's hopes are centred, was situated.

This hôtel built in the year 1712 by Cardinal Constantine de Rohan, uncle of the grand almoner, on a portion of the gardens of the Hôtel de Soubise, is now the National Printing Office, and internally retains no traces of what it was when Prince Louis de Rohan lived here in state befitting the dignity of a prince of the German empire and a cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. The entrance gateway and the buildings forming the external boundaries of the court in front of the hôtel are, with the exception of some evident alterations, much the same as they were in the days when the Countess de la Motte was a frequent visitor at the Palais-Cardinal. The court itself is divided by parallel ranges of buildings at right angles with the principal front, and a gateway on the right-hand side leads to what was evidently the stable-court, where a noble bas-relief by Couston, representing the watering of the horses of the sun, with the animals full life-size, may be seen over one of the arched entrances to the stables—those stables where the horse of one of the cardinal's heyducs dropped down dead on a memorable occasion of which we shall by-and-by have to speak.

The principal façade of the De Rohan hôtel has undergone only some slight alteration since the grand almoner's time, but it is far



different with the interior ; the grand staircase has been removed, and the magnificent *salons de réception* have been converted into *bureaux* for the officials attached to the national printing establishment. In the principal waiting-room are four paintings by Boucher, said to have formed part of the original decorations of the Palais-Cardinal : one represents Mars attiring for the wars, with Venus holding his shield and Cupid handing him his helmet ; another shows Mars reposing, with Venus, who looks wonderfully like a French marchioness of the eighteenth century, with even a scantier allowance of drapery than usual, reclining beside him on a cloud ; a third portrays Juno with her peacock, the immortal Jove facing her, and Boreas and Æolus at his feet, blowing as though they would burst ; while in the fourth subject we have Neptune ruling the waves with his trident, and a trio of lusty sea-gods spurting water out of long conch-shaped shells.

The garden front of the Palais-Cardinal is far more elegant than the one which looks upon the court ; being decorated with lofty columns surmounted with enriched capitals, and having sundry emblems as well as the armorial bearings of the house of Rohan sculptured on the projections of the façade. Only a small portion of the palace garden now remains to it, the chief part being covered over with long ranges of offices in which the workpeople attached to the national printing establishment ply their several callings.

The Countess de la Motte was woman of the world enough to know that much may be accomplished by personal solicitation when written applications are of little or no avail. The Cardinal de Rohan too had a reputation for gallantry ; and as for the countess herself, she tells us in her "Memoirs" that "her face, if not exactly handsome, had a certain piquancy about it which, combined with her vivacity (Beugnot admits her smile was perfectly enchanting), supplied in her the want of beauty so far as to lay her open to the importunities of designing men." She therefore sought an audience of the grand almoner, and, finding that this would be accorded her, called upon young Beugnot the day before to beg three things of him—his carriage, his servant to follow her, and himself to accompany her. "All these," said she, "are indispensable, since there are only two good ways of asking alms—at the

church door, and in a carriage." "I did not," observes Beugnot, "raise any difficulties as to the first two points, but I peremptorily refused my arm, as I could only have presented myself with her before the Cardinal de Rohan in the character of her advocate, after his eminence had been notified of my coming, and had given his permission."<sup>1</sup> Madame was, therefore, constrained to present herself at the cardinal's hôtel without any other escort beyond the footman lent to her by her friend.

At the first interview Madame de la Motte had with the cardinal, the latter, as might have been expected from his well-known character for gallantry, proved incapable of resisting the countess's artful allurements, and she, bent on completing the conquest which she felt she had made, was careful on the occasion of subsequent visits to the Hôtel de Strasbourg, to pay the utmost attention to her toilet—decking herself out in her finest feathers, putting on her most coquettish airs, and making the magnificent saloons of the Rue Vielle-du-Temple redolent with the odour of her perfumes.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. pp. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoire Historique des Intrigues de la Cour," etc., par Rétaux de Villette, p. 10.

## VII.

1783.

OSCILLATES BETWEEN PARIS AND VERSAILLES.—SENDS OUT BEGGING LETTERS AND PETITIONS.—FAINTS IN MADAME'S SALLE D'ATTENTE.—DESPAIR.

At the time the countess was engaged in setting her snares for the Cardinal de Rohan, she dined one day with our young Bar-sur-Aube advocate, who saw that she was in most excellent spirits, which every now and then exhaled in malicious remarks respecting their common acquaintances. "I tried in vain," says Beugnot, "to lead her to more serious talk. Irritated at last, I threatened to abandon her entirely to her folly. She answered me gaily that she no longer had need of me. My brow contracted; she saw that she was likely to lose me, and took the trouble to explain to me that I had been exceedingly useful to her in unravelling the particulars of her claim, in composing 'mémoires' and petitions for her—in a word, in all the duties of an advocate—but that she had now arrived at a point where she required counsel of a different kind. She wanted some one who could point out to her the way of getting at the queen and the *contrôleur-général*, and who knew equally well what was necessary to be done as to be left undone—in a word, one who was alike capable of concocting a good intrigue, and of carrying it successfully through. It was necessary that I should now hear from her lips, without making an ugly grimace with my own, that in an affair of this kind she looked upon me as the most foolish of men; she had, indeed, already taken several steps without asking my advice. Her husband's condition, she went on to say, was one of ridicule to all the world, and consequently an obstacle to her advancement. She had made him enter as supernumerary into the Count d'Artois' body-guard, which would give him a sort of standing, which the gendarmerie did not. She had found means, moreover, to get him to Versailles to perform



his duties there, and where, at least, he would not be so sorry a sight as he was in the country. She observed that she was about to reside at Versailles herself, in order to secure an opportunity of getting at the queen, and of interesting her majesty in her favour. This was the first time," remarks Beugnot, "that she pronounced the name of her sovereign in my presence."<sup>1</sup>

At Versailles, which at this period was crowded with intriguers and adventurers, living for the most part by their wits, the countess resided, first of all with the widow Bourgeois, in the Place Dauphine, whence she speedily removed to the Hôtel de Jouy, in the Rue des Récollets, a long narrow street leading on to the immense Place d'Armes, in front of the château. Some of its houses—built in strict accordance with the edict promulgated by the *grand monarque* at the time a new Versailles was springing up in the neighbourhood of his vast palace, namely, only a single storey high, with attics, and roofed with slate—evidently date back to the days of Louis XIV. The Hôtel de Jouy, where the countess had her quarters, is now an ordinary dwelling-house, lofty and narrow, with a certain air of respectability about it, situated at the far end of the street (No. 23),<sup>2</sup> in an opposite direction to the château.

Having next to nothing to live upon, it is not to be wondered at that the De la Mottes were soon deeply in debt. The countess, it is true, converted her apartment into a kind of office, whence she periodically sent forth letters of supplication to the nobility for relief, and petitions to the crown praying for the restoration of the Saint-Remi domains; but although she urged her suit with audacious pertinacity, the result seems to have fallen far short of her expectations. Fortunately for her there was always the Cardinal de Rohan to fall back upon, and the snares which she laid for him appear to have been set to some purpose, for ere six months had gone by, Madame de la Motte had so far improved her acquaintance with the grand almoner, who even assisted her in the composition of her petitions and memorials,<sup>3</sup> as to become convinced—in accordance with the rule she had laid down, that alms

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. pp. 25, 26.

<sup>2</sup> "Histoire anecdotique des Rues de Versailles," par J. A. Le Roi.

<sup>3</sup> "Premier Interrogatoire du Cardinal de Rohan."



could be only effectively asked for at the church-door or from a carriage—that a more respectable lodging was indispensable to enable her to profit by the opportunities which this intercourse seemed to open out to her. There were, moreover, other and most pressing reasons for quitting the Hôtel de Reims. The De la Mottes were fifteen hundred and eighty francs in debt to their landlord, who had latterly not only lodged, but boarded them; in addition to which the countess had quarrelled with the landlady, and had attempted, it was said, to throw her downstairs.<sup>1</sup> The result was a police case, and their ejection from the premises. A “spacious *appartement*,” the rent of which was twelve hundred francs, was therefore hired by them in Paris, in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles (No. 13), at that time a quiet and very respectable street leading out of the Rue Saint-Louis, now the Rue Turenne, and consisting entirely of private houses, within sight, too, of the Place Royale, where three centuries ago stood the ancient Palais des Tournelles, at the tournament in front of which Madame de la Motte’s royal ancestor, Henri de Valois, lost his life, and almost in a direct line (in an opposite direction to the Rue de la Verrerie) with the cardinal’s hôtel, from which it was distant only a couple of short streets, or some five or six minutes’ walk. Owing to their straitened means the De la Mottes were unable to furnish their new *appartement* until the month of May, 1783, and in the meantime madame, when not at Versailles, was obliged to live *au cinquième* with the mother of her *femme de chambre*,<sup>2</sup> and yet she pretends that at this time she kept five servants, male and female, and a couple of carriages.<sup>3</sup>

This was mere vain boasting. She was not yet in a position to ask alms from a carriage, but was still obliged to send her begging letters through the post, or be herself the bearer of them. One of these missives, written at this particular epoch, and evidently addressed to some person in an official position—possibly to M. d’Ormesson, the then controller-general, or to M. de Breteuil, minister of the king’s household—has been preserved, and furnishes a fair specimen of her style of appeal to persons in power—a little

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoire pour le Cardinal de Rohan,” p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> “Premier Interrogatoire de Madame de la Motte.”

flattery, more or less hypocrisy, allusions to her high descent, and a covert threat or two. We extract its main passages, which we have translated as closely as the bad handwriting and worse spelling of the original document admitted of our doing.

“You have done me the honour, sir, of informing me that you have caused to be remitted to M. Lenoir several notes which I have sent you ; but I believed that you, sir, would have had the goodness to oblige me, who am more sensible than any one of the confidence which the king has in you. You are too just to see any harm in there being granted me so small a sum as has, to my knowledge, just been accorded to a person who is not so much to be pitied as I, nor with so much right. I cannot think who it is that has usurped the place due to my misfortunes. . . . I know that M. de Forge [intendant of the royal fisheries and forests, of which one or more of the Valois estates was part] is very much opposed to my having the estate which I ask by right ; still I cannot conceive that it matters to him whether I or another am tenant of the king. . . . I have the honour of assuring you that I had yesterday only a single livre (franc), consequently I may well hope to improve my fortune. . . . It is you, sir, and your good faith that console me. I am very sensible that you are not unmindful of my misfortunes. I believe that you told me you would speak to M. de Vergennes. I have inquired if this matter is under his control, and am assured it is on you alone that it depends. I recommend myself, therefore, to your kindness. . . . It is not my intention to offer a menace to any one in declaring that I shall end by throwing myself at the feet of the king, and acquainting him with all my misfortunes. If you, sir, cannot lend me your assistance, I beg you to have the goodness to cause to be returned to me the documents which I have had the honour to send you. I shall see, on the day of the audience, whether it will not be possible for me to change my lot, and for my efforts to get me accorded the trifling sum I have asked. M. Lenoir sent me yesterday a safe conduct, which M. Amelon requested of him on my behalf, for a large sum which I have owed these two years past, but which has not yet reduced me to sell my furniture, and thereby cause scandals which would assuredly have been aimed at me. Nevertheless,

there is no help for it ; I shall be forced to make away with it so that I may live. God has not yet determined my fate, and, if Providence does not show pity on me, people will have to reproach themselves at seeing me come to a most miserable end. I am not ashamed to tell you, sir, that I am going out into the world to beg. I have borrowed from the Baron de Clugny, of the Ministry of Marine, three hundred livres to enable me to live, which, counting on your goodness, I have promised to return him in a week's time. No one, sir, has so much reason to complain as I have—my husband without a post, my sister for a long time on my hands, has, of course, contributed to my debts. People may do as they please with me ; still, I say it is frightful to abandon a relation of a king, whom he has himself recognised, and who is in the most frightful position. You will, doubtless, sir, consider me very unreasonable, but I cannot keep myself from complaining, since not even the smallest grace is accorded me. I am no longer surprised that so many people are driven into crime, and I can say, moreover, that it is religion alone that keeps me from doing wrong. . . . .

“ I have the honour to be, with all the attachment of which you are deserving, Sir,

“ Your very humble, very obedient Servant,

“ COUNTESS DE VALOIS DE LA MOTTE.

“ Paris, May 16th, 1783.”<sup>\*</sup>

Unless she desired to have a couple of strings to her bow, we can hardly imagine the “ safe conduct ” referred to in the foregoing letter being required by Madame de la Motte, since in her Memoirs

<sup>\*</sup> Unpublished Autograph Letter of the Countess de la Motte in the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches. This letter is endorsed “ M. Lenoir. The concession asked is impossible. Can they obtain other help ? 18th May, 1783.” M. Lenoir was lieutenant-general of police at this period, but—owing, it is said, to the despotic way in which he acted while occupying this position, coupled with his abject devotion to the resentments of the great, which induced the Duke de Nivernois to style him the first slave in the kingdom—he was subsequently rewarded with the post of president of the administration of finances, and eventually with the more lucrative one of librarian to the king, a position for which it may be supposed his antecedents had hardly qualified him.



she tells us that the Countess de Provence interested herself to procure for her an *arrêt de surséance*, or writ under the king's sign manual, which not only protected the person named in it from arrest, but saved him or her from being harassed by suits at law as well. Madame de la Motte at the same time obtained a "safe conduct" for her husband, the count. Convenient documents, both of these, for individuals of their stamp. The count's "safe conduct" was not procured before there was pressing need of it, for at this time the ex-gendarme was hiding from his creditors in a little *auberge* at Brie-Comte-Robert,<sup>1</sup> famous now-a-days for its beautiful roses, a score or so of miles from Paris on the Lyons road, and close to the Abbey of Jarcy, where his sister-in-law, Mademoiselle de Saint-Remi, afterwards went to reside. The chances are that he had already lost his post in the Count d'Artois' body-guard, although Madame de la Motte pretended that the countess was her protectress, and that the count used to notice her "in a particular manner" whenever she went to church at Versailles—a notice which, by the way, it has been insinuated, subsequently ripened into a too familiar intimacy.<sup>2</sup>

The furniture which, on the guarantee of a Jew, the De la Mottes eventually succeeded in obtaining for their new *appartement* in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, was far from splendid, and it was, moreover, every now and then being sent to some neighbour, notably to Burlandeux, the count's barber, to save it from being taken in execution,<sup>3</sup> and not unfrequently to the pawnbrokers to provide the family with meat and bread.<sup>4</sup> The countess of course kept up her intimacy with the cardinal, on whose liberality, or call it charity if you will, she could to a certain extent depend. If we believe the cardinal's statement, the donations he bestowed upon her at this period were far from being of that prodigal character which the countess afterwards asserted them to have been, and were more consistent with his character of priest and grand almoner than that of lover and man of gallantry, which latter Madame de

<sup>1</sup> "Confrontations du Cardinal avec Madame de la Motte."

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoire Historique des Intrigues de la Cour," etc., par Rétaux de Villette, p. 8, and "Anecdotes du Règne de Louis XVI." vol. i. p. 367.

<sup>3</sup> "Confrontations du Cardinal avec Madame de la Motte."

<sup>4</sup> See *post*, p. 47.



la Motte openly insinuated was the nature of the cardinal's then relations towards her. The cardinal asserted that four or five louis at a time, and at irregular and somewhat distant intervals, was the extent of the benefactions she received from him ; but he was forced to admit that he had given her twenty-five louis on one occasion, and it eventually oozed out that he had also made himself personally liable to a Jew money-lender of Nancy for five thousand five hundred livres (francs), a debt contracted by the count when he was stationed at Lunéville, and which amount the cardinal of course eventually had to pay.<sup>1</sup> These facts would seem to prove that at this period the countess had succeeded in ensnaring her victim, preparatory to making him, as she afterwards did, her dupe and then her instrument.

Madame de la Motte was very much in the habit of exaggerating the amount of the charitable gifts bestowed upon her by members of the royal family and some few of the French nobility, and even claimed to have received certain apocryphal sums from persons of distinction who never once assisted her. The reason for this will be apparent enough in the course of our narrative. In the memorials and reports published in 1786 are various disclaimers on the part of people of rank, among others the Duke de Chartres (afterwards Orléans Égalité), the Duke de Penthièvre, the Duke de Choiseul, the *contrôleur-général*, &c., showing that these exceedingly liberal benefactors, as the countess had made them out to be, had either given nothing at all, or else that a huge disparity existed between the sum really given and the amount pretended to have been received. Her friend, Beugnot, moreover, speaks at this period of sundry treats of an evening on the Boulevards, consisting of cakes and beer, a beverage for which she had a particular liking, while, as regards cakes, she would devour two or three dozen of these at a sitting, making it evident that she had dined but lightly on these occasions, if, indeed, she had dined at all.<sup>2</sup> She, however, most astonished Beugnot by the voracity of her appetite when she dined with him, as she every now and then did, at the "*Cadran bleu*," a noted tavern in the Champs Elysées, whence on

<sup>1</sup> "Premier Interrogatoire de Madame de la Motte."

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. p. 21.

a memorable occasion, some eight years later, five hundred and odd Marseillais, who had marched up to Paris in defence of their fellow "patriots," and whose march inspired the composition of the world-renowned Marseillaise hymn, rushed forth on the grenadiers of the Filles Saint-Thomas section, and drove them pell-mell over the drawbridge of the Tuileries. Other friends of the countess's tell, too, of frequent loans of ten, fifteen, or twenty livres at a time, all of which is tolerable evidence of semi-starvation and penury rather than of an abundance or even a sufficiency of means.

Spite, nevertheless, of the limited nature of their resources, there is no doubt but that when the De la Mottes had regularly settled down in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, they made pretensions to something like display. They borrowed, for instance, a service of silver plate of a friend—a M. de Vieilleville; and according to the countess's own statement, M. de Calonne, at one of the interviews she succeeded in obtaining with him just after his appointment to the office of *contrôleur-général*, plainly told her that she was only "shamming poverty," and commenced twitting her respecting her hôtel at Paris, her cabriolet, her coach, her travelling-carriage, and her servants in livery. To convince Calonne that whatever might be her style of living, she was nevertheless in great pecuniary difficulties, she took him one day the tickets for numerous articles of furniture pledged by her at the Mont de Piété, and by this ruse succeeded in securing some small amount of official sympathy, which developed itself in a gift of six hundred livres from the royal treasury, on the express condition, however, that she was to make no further appeals.

Soon after the countess had become regularly resident in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, she was a frequent attendant at mass at a convent of Minimes, on the opposite side of the way, which has long since been demolished, and barracks for gendarmerie erected on its site, but the remembrance of which is still preserved in the nomenclature of several of the adjacent streets. A certain Father Loth having his eye upon so interesting an addition to the common fold, made her an offer of a key by means of which she might let herself into the chapel to the ten o'clock mass, attended, as he explained to her, only by persons of her own condition. The countess accepted the offer, and a kind of acquaintanceship sprang up be-

tween Father Loth and her, which resulted in the former becoming a constant visitor at the De la Mottes, and insinuating himself into the confidence of the family; and subsequently, when brighter days dawned upon them, officiating as a sort of steward of their household.

Although the countess went constantly to Versailles, in the hope of obtaining by some lucky chance access to the queen, she seems to have been baffled in all her efforts. She had scraped acquaintance with Desclos, one of the queen's pages, at a man-midwife's at Versailles,<sup>1</sup> and was on gossiping terms with the gate-keeper of the Little Trianon, but could make no further advance at court, until by a lucky chance she one day succeeded in penetrating into the apartments of one of the princesses. Here, whilst waiting among other visitors for her turn to be introduced, she suddenly fell down like a person fainting from weakness, and otherwise exhibited symptoms of great suffering. Her poverty being known, there was instantly a rumour afoot that sheer hunger was the cause of this debility. The incident produced considerable excitement in the court circle, and news reaching the ears of the Countess de Provence that a lady of rank had fainted in the *salle d'attente*, from lack of sustenance, she flew to her assistance, and after treating her with all the tenderness that humanity dictated, gave her some twelve or fifteen louis to relieve her necessities. The countess, much affected by the occurrence, is said to have mentioned it on the following day to Marie-Antoinette, who was about to yield to the impression it made upon her sensibility; but Louis XVI., who had received so many of Madame de la Motte's petitions, and had been sufficiently bored thereby, had conceived a strong prejudice against both her and her pretensions, and pronounced her swoon to be a mere ruse to extort money. The result was that the queen closed her purse-strings, and Madame de la Motte took little or nothing by her move. Most persons in her situation, after this signal failure, would have considered their struggle for court favour as fairly concluded, but it was far from being so with her. She was one of those indomitable spirits gifted with a pertinacity which no mere rebuff could check, no disappointment discourage.

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. p. 17.



For some time past the countess had made a point of laying siege to one controller-general after another—first to M. Joly de Fleury, then to M. d’Ormesson, and finally to M. de Calonne, in whose antechamber she was a constant attendant, and whom she so pestered with her petitions and memorials and personal appeals for relief, spite of the understanding come to when the six hundred livres were given to her, that she became at length a kind of terror to the minister, who showered gold around him with easy facility from a bankrupt exchequer, while, as a courtier said, “All the world held out its hand, but I held out my hat.” To rid himself of the countess’s importunities, and urged by Madame Elisabeth and the Countess de Provence (who since the fainting scene had taken some kind of interest in her) to do something towards her relief, M. de Calonne obtained an augmentation of seven hundred livres (twenty-eight pounds) to the De la Motte pension. Instead, however, of feeling in any degree grateful for this act of favour, the countess tells us that when the minister communicated the intelligence to her she indignantly refused this “pitiful addition,” as she called it, “to her income.” Visions of the restoration of the Essoyes, Fontette and Verpillière estates had been floating before her eyes, and in the heat of her passion she exclaimed, “I will oblige you, sir, to speak of my demands to the king. Tell him, sir, that I will fix myself in this house”—the palace of Versailles—“until he thinks proper to provide me with another home.” And the irate countess in accordance with her threat did actually remain for several hours, but at last took her departure, because, as she naïvely remarks, her further stay there “would have answered no purpose.”<sup>1</sup>

It must have been about this period that the countess, harassed by pecuniary difficulties, and determined to exhaust every chance of relief that suggested itself, ventured upon an appeal to Madame Dubarry, the late king’s banished mistress, who clung as close upon the skirts of the Court as she dared do, residing in her charming pavilion at Louveciennes, within eye-shot of Versailles. Thither Madame de la Motte drove over one day ostensibly to offer herself as *dame de compagnie* to the dowager queen, as she used ironically

<sup>1</sup> “Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself,” vol. i. p. 261.



to style the once all-powerful favourite of Louis the Well-Beloved ; but Madame Dubarry, judging from the absurd pretensions she put forward with regard to her name and birth, thought her little fitted for the post she sought to fill, and told her that she was not at that moment in want of a companion, adding sarcastically that if she were, she was not great lady enough to engage one of so high a quality as a descendant of the house of Valois. Nothing disconcerted, the countess called a second time a few days afterwards, and made a pitiable appeal to the Dubarry to support her claims at court, shedding floods of tears as she spoke. But as soon as her back was turned, "La Faiblesse," as Marie-Antoinette was accustomed to style the Dubarry, whose heart was none of the most susceptible, bored by the countess's melting display, and caring not a straw for the house of Valois or any of its bastard descendants, flung both petition and memoir, which the countess had presented to her, into the fire.<sup>1</sup>

The countess now addressed herself to the well-known favourite of Marie-Antoinette, the Duchess de Polignac, whose influence over her royal mistress, whenever she chose to exercise it, was believed to be supreme. The duchess, however, got rid of her once for all with this freezing reply : "Madame the duchess is too much engaged for other persons to oblige Madame de la Motte in any claim which she may have to make of the king or the queen, who are already fatigued with numberless applications." The descendant of the house of Valois was cut to the quick at the treatment she received at the hands of "this imperious woman, whose haughty demeanour sufficiently characterises her grovelling extraction. Was this the woman," she exclaims, "whom in my humble station of mantua-maker's apprentice I had so frequently waited upon from Madame Boussel's to obtain payment, and who then instead of money could only pay me with courtesy and fair promises ? Is this she who before the smile of royal favour no tradesman chose to trust, and even her mantua-maker refused to work for any longer, and who had not even a dress in which she could be presented at Court ?" <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Déposition de la Comtesse du Barry.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 265, *et seq.*

Sick at heart, weary almost unto death, the wretched woman saw no escape from the pecuniary embarrassments that threatened to overwhelm her, except in suicide. Providing herself, she tells us, with a couple of loaded pistols she bent her steps towards a wood about a league distant from Versailles, and passing through the park, came to a large and deep pit, which had formerly been a stone quarry. Here she prepared to carry her resolution into effect, and had placed one of the pistols to her right ear when thoughts of her husband stayed her hand. Flinging herself on the ground she wept long and bitterly, and then offered up a fervent prayer. On becoming more calm she returned home, still however mourning her unhappy fate.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 275.

## VIII.

1781-1783.

## THE DIAMOND NECKLACE AGAIN.—STILL NOT SOLD.

WHILE the events narrated in the last chapter have been transpiring, let us see how it has fared with our friends the crown jewellers and their Diamond Necklace. M. Bassenge, after scouring Europe through, and ascending and descending principal and back staircases innumerable, and dancing wearying attendance in court saloons and antechambers, has returned home without effecting a sale. "Not a crowned head of them can spare the eighty thousand pounds. The age of Chivalry is gone, and that of Bankruptcy is come. A dull deep-presaging movement rocks all thrones : Bankruptcy is beating down the gate, and no chancellor can barricade her out. She will enter, and the shoreless fire-lava of Democracy is at her back. Well may kings a second time 'sit still with awful eye,' and think of far other things than necklaces."<sup>1</sup>

Bassenge's mission having been without result, let us turn to M. Böhmer, and see what kind of luck has attended his efforts. On the 22nd of October, 1781, the Queen of France gave birth to a dauphin. Böhmer, who felt this to be a favourable opportunity for him to renew his application, flew to the palace with his casket under his arm, and saw the king, at that moment the happiest man in the land. Louis XVI. received the jeweller with much condescension, and taking the casket from him, carried it to the queen, telling her, with animated looks, that he had got a present for her. But Marie-Antoinette had no sooner recognised the gorgeous gem which she had formerly rejected than she refused to receive it, even at the king's hands ; nor could the most earnest solicitations on his part abate in the smallest degree the feeling of

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle's "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays," vol. iv. p. 11

antipathy with which, guided by her prophetic instincts, she seems to have regarded the fatal jewel.

"Is it," asked she, "that Böhmer may take girls covered with diamonds to the opera, that you would pay him for his folly in manufacturing this Necklace?"

While uttering these words the queen was greatly excited. Her nurse felt her pulse, and finding it very high begged the king not to insist further. Louis XVI. withdrew completely disconcerted.<sup>1</sup>

Now Böhmer, the crown jeweller, was a Saxon, and we all know that the Saxons are a persevering race who do not readily desist from a pursuit. Besides, he had gained a step; the king had as good as sanctioned the purchase; he was won over, and in due time the queen might be brought to relent and consent to become the possessor of the most splendid set of brilliants in the world. Moreover she was known at one time to have entertained a woman's partiality for costly jewels. What could be the reason of her present antipathy? Was it natural in one so young and handsome? Was it consistent? Was it, indeed, sincere?

This persecution of Marie-Antoinette, which had begun in 1774, was continued for ten years; and every time the palace guns announced a new *accouchement* the indefatigable Böhmer, his casket under his arm, was the first to carry his loyal congratulations to the feet of his sovereign. In due time the crown jeweller became noted for this kind of loyalty, so that whenever he was met with in the streets of Versailles, certain wags used to point him out and ask each other, "*Serait-ce la Reine qui accouche?*"

Madame Campan, in her well-known work, assures us that this persistent Saxon was for a long time the plague of the queen's life. She relates, among other instances of Böhmer's persecution, that he one day presented himself before her majesty, who had the young princess her daughter with her at the time, in a state of unusual excitement. Throwing himself at the queen's feet, he burst into tears, and exclaimed that he could put off his creditors no longer, that he was a ruined man unless she took compassion on him and became the purchaser of his Necklace, and that if she rejected his appeal he would throw himself into the Seine, and so

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires de Mdlle. Bertin," p. 92.



put an end to his misery. The queen reproved him mildly for his rash threat, but at the same time told him that if he were madman enough to put an end to his existence, it would not be she who was responsible for the misfortune. She reminded him that she had not given the order for the jewel, and advised him to extricate himself from his difficulties by taking the Necklace to pieces and disposing of the diamonds piecemeal.<sup>1</sup>

Mademoiselle Bertin, the queen's milliner, asserts that at the time she was engaged in preparing the wedding trousseau of the bride of the Infant of Portugal, M. de Souza, the Portuguese ambassador, confided to her that he was commissioned by his sovereign to buy for the future Infanta the most magnificent present which could be met with in all Paris, and that he had decided upon purchasing the crown jewellers' Diamond Necklace. Mademoiselle Bertin mentioned the circumstance to Marie-Antoinette the following day, while engaged with her at her toilette.

"I am very glad of it," observed the queen. "I shall send for Böhmer, and will certainly thank M. de Souza for having relieved me of this hateful Necklace."

When Böhmer entered, the queen took up a book and read for some minutes before speaking, as her habit was when she wished to evince her displeasure, which, on this occasion, must have been the result either of inexplicable caprice or feminine jealousy at a foreign princess becoming the possessor of that jewel to which the negotiations and travels of Böhmer and Bassenge had given a kind of European celebrity, and which had caused such a sensation among queens and women. At length, laying down her book and casting on Böhmer a severe glance, she observed:

"I am very glad to hear, sir, that you have sold your Necklace."

"My Necklace, madame!" replied the astonished Böhmer.

"Yes, your Necklace, that M. de Souza is about to send to Lisbon."

Böhmer having given an emphatic denial to the story, the queen, we are told, cast on Mdlle. Bertin a withering look as if to reproach her for having needlessly alarmed her.

There was a reception that day, and when M. de Souza appeared,

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. pp. 5, 6.

the queen, contrary to all the rules of court etiquette, went straight up to him and said, briskly :

"I have to inform you, M. de Souza, that you will not have the Necklace ; it is sold."

M. de Souza appearing astonished,

"You will not have it, sir," continued she, in a tone of triumph. "I am sorry for it." Saying which she returned to her ladies.<sup>1</sup>

Thus matters stood at the close of 1783, ten years after the order for this ill-fated jewel had been given by the infatuated lover of Madame Dubarry. Although all France was at this time wildly rejoicing over the recently concluded peace between France and England, there was gloom and depression at the Grand Balcony in the Rue Vendôme, for creditors were still urgent and even threatening, and the question again arose : "What is now to be done?"

"Mémoires de Mdlle. Bertin," p. 99, *et seq.* Certain French bibliographers have pronounced these memoirs to be forged. In quoting from them, however, we are only following in the steps of M. Louis Blanc, who we presume considers them authentic. From the "Mémoire" forwarded to the queen by the crown jewellers on August, 12, 1785, it would appear that negotiations for the sale of the Necklace had been opened with the Court of Spain and not the Court of Portugal, as stated in the Bertin "Mémoires," which circumstance certainly goes a good way to impugn the authenticity of the latter.

This celebrated milliner, whose name and fame have become historic, was, it seems, employed by the Spanish court, and went to Madrid in performance of her duties as milliner to the Spanish crown. When, preparatory to her return to France, she presented her account to the Minister of Finance for settlement, that functionary, who had not the slightest knowledge of the details of her important art, strongly objected to the amount which she claimed—some 8000*l.* The king, equally astonished with his minister, proceeded to settle with the indignant milliner, by giving orders to his *chargé-d'affaires* in Paris to have the account taxed. Mdlle. Bertin protested that her account would not admit of reduction, and said that Spain was very far from being civilized, since there was all this cavilling about such an essential matter as articles of feminine attire. Marie-Antoinette, it seems, interfered in her milliner's favour, and eventually the account was settled without abatement.—See "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc. vol. ii. p. 21.

## IX.

1784.

SOI-DISANT CONFIDANT OF THE QUEEN.—AT VERSAILLES AND  
LITTLE TRIANON.

IN the preceding chapters we have measured the period between the year 1756, when Jeanne de Saint-Remi, now Countess de la Motte of her own creation, was born, and the close of the year 1783, when she had reached the age of twenty-seven years. We have witnessed the destitution of her early days, the dependence of her youth on the kind bounty of a noble benefactress, and the career of adventure and precarious means suddenly plunged into to avoid a life of religious seclusion. We have seen her making her escape from flagrant shame by an improvident marriage; have seen the opening of her conjugal life darkened by a new term of penury and privation, mitigated only by a system of constant appeals for charity. We have also seen that a long and patient probation in the same course had proved barren and abortive in the end, her condition being then precisely the same as it was in the beginning. We can readily conceive that her name and her pretensions had at length come to be regarded as little else than a by-word and a nuisance, and that the time was at hand when the former would have no other influence beyond provoking indignation and contempt.

The family resources proved so far insufficient, that early in the year 1784 household goods and wearing apparel were alike in pawn at the Mont de Piété, which is hardly to be wondered at, as the winter was one of unprecedented severity. Heavy and constant falls of snow rendered any kind of traffic through the streets of Paris impracticable. The Seine, too, was frozen over, so that the transport of provisions and firewood to the capital was entirely stopped.<sup>1</sup> The times were of the hardest: the winter extended far

\* "Louis XVI." par Alexandre Dumas, vol. iii. p. 1, *et seq.*



into the year, and in the month of April the countess solicited and obtained permission to alienate her own and her brother's pension—the sister, we presume, was obstinate, and would not dispose of hers, hence her being sent adrift to shift for herself, and becoming an inmate of the Abbey of Jarcy—to a goldsmith and money-lender, named Grenier, for the sum of nine thousand livres.<sup>1</sup> This amount, however, was insufficient to liquidate the whole of their debts, and at midsummer the countess was forced to borrow three hundred livres from Father Loth to pay her quarter's rent.<sup>2</sup> The two pensions utterly gone, beggary and open vagrancy loom in the distance, for the cardinal's gifts, however handsome they may have been at this period, go but a small way now that ever-increasing debt is supplemented by habitual extravagance. In a few months more the wretched adventurers will be forced to quit their "spacious *appartement*" in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, and go forth into the streets and highways, and in the name of Valois again implore charity of the passing stranger. What remedy—what desperate remedy could be devised to prevent this?

The countess's interview with the Countess de Provence, after the fainting scene, had made some little noise, and reports were spread to the effect that Madame Elisabeth, the king's sister, had since received her on several occasions, and had promised to support her claim for the recovery of the Valois estates, and to recommend her case again to the queen. We have no means of judging whether these reports were true, but as Madame Campan admits Madame Elisabeth to have been the countess's "protectress," there was in all probability some real foundation for them. Shortly afterwards, however, other reports, which were undoubted fabrications, got into circulation. The purport of these was, that Madame de la Motte had been honoured by the notice of Marie-Antoinette, that she was received privately at the Petit Trianon, and was rising rapidly in the royal favour. To give an air of probability to this assertion, the countess, who had contrived to scrape acquaintance with the gatekeeper of the Trianon, managed to be seen occasionally stealing out from thence, as

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire pour le Cardinal de Rohan," p. 11; and Déposition de Grenier.

<sup>2</sup> Déposition du Père Loth.



though returning from one of these pretended interviews with royalty.

No sooner did it get bruited abroad that the Countess de la Motte had credit at court than she was applied to by that busy and motley group of suitors—some of them in search of places and appointments, others in quest of patronage for new inventions, or on the look-out for opportunities to submit new schemes of taxation and finance, and others again seeking redress of real or fancied grievances—who gather together in the vicinage of royalty. The daring woman saw her chance, and entering boldly on a career of imposture, began to traffic on a credit that had no foundation, and to sell an influence which she could not exercise. This new vocation bid fair to prove a much readier source of emolument than her state petitions for relief. People came to her of their own accord, waited in *her* ante-chamber for an interview, conjured and supplicated *her* to lend them her protection, and in the meantime to permit them to show their gratitude by anticipation, and in a substantial form.

In this new line of business she was assisted by an old acquaintance and former comrade of her husband's in the *gendarmérie*, one Rétaux de Villette, son of a late director-general of excise at Lyons, and at this time about thirty years of age. Villette left Lyons when a lad, and accompanied his mother to Troyes, where he completed his education. His sister having married a captain of artillery, and being himself inclined to a military career, he followed his brother-in-law to the schools of Douai and Bapaume, and when this latter establishment was suppressed, entered the *gendarmérie*, where he formed a sort of intimacy with M. de la Motte—an intimacy which was afterwards renewed at Bar-sur-Aube, whither his mother had removed from the neighbouring town of Troyes. Villette having exhausted the paternal patrimony, had come to Paris to push his fortunes. His ambition was to obtain a sub-lieutenancy in the marshalsea, still he was not averse to turning his hand to anything that offered itself. He was not deficient in talent, and had a certain facility of expression; for he wrote smartish articles in the *Gazette*, could compose pleasing enough verses, and was a very fair musician.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Marie-Antoinette et le Procès du Collier," par E. Campardon, p. 44.

Nevertheless he was one of those indolent, careless men, without the slightest forethought, who cannot follow any regular calling, because they are only stirred into activity by sudden caprices, and who too often serve no other purpose beyond replenishing the world's stock of rascaldom, and doing their best to save it from dying out. Finding that he was a suppliant for court favour, Madame de la Motte first of all persuaded him that she could advance his interests, then that she would procure for him some better post than a sub-lieutenancy in the marshalsea, and finally engaged him as her secretary, and by dint of "her piquant face, her bright and piercing eyes, her white and transparent skin, her fine teeth, her enchanting smile, her pretty hand and little foot, her graceful manner, and natural wit," soon enrolled him as one of her lovers.<sup>1</sup>

We will here let the countess give her own account of her pretended intimacy with Marie-Antoinette, an intimacy which it is impossible to believe in for a single moment, since those who lived in the queen's service and society were unanimous in maintaining that the countess was never once admitted to the queen's presence, nor seen in the company of any lady of her court.

"One day," she observes, "as I was paying my court to Madame (the Countess de Provence), I was attacked with a sudden indisposition (the fainting fit of which we have already spoken), which made some noise at the palace; the queen, having become acquainted with the incident, deigned to evince some interest in me; her majesty even sent for Madame Patri, the principal *femme de chambre* of Madame, to ascertain the particulars.

"Nothing can escape the eyes of courtiers. They remarked from that hour, that her majesty always distinguished me by a gracious look, whenever I appeared in her presence. The cardinal (de Rohan) surpassed everybody in giving full rein to his conjectures.

"As I had received his benefits, the most natural gratitude linked me to his fate . . . for him I had no secrets; he had none for me . . . his ambition was to be prime minister, mine to be a lady of influence at Fontette. . . .

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot" and Villette's "Mémoire Historique."

"Nothing could equal the astonishment into which I was thrown one day, when having placed myself in the line of the queen's passage, her majesty condescended to honour me with one of those smiles which are so hard to be resisted. I remember that the next moment, having chanced to raise my eyes towards him (the cardinal), I saw his own sparkle with delight. 'Do you know, countess,' said he, 'that my fortune is made? it is in your hands along with your own.' . . . He told me I ought not to hesitate to throw myself at the queen's feet on the 2nd of February, during the procession of the blue ribbons (the order of the Holy Ghost). . . . Accustomed to be guided entirely by him, I promised to do what he enjoined me.

"The important day arrived . . . I went to the palace in full dress, and waited in one of the saloons for the return of the procession. When the queen was passing, I flung myself at her feet, and delivering my petition, said to her, in a few words, that I was descended from the house of Valois; that as such I had been acknowledged by the king; that the fortune of my ancestors not having been transmitted to me along with their title, I had no other resource than the king's munificence; that having found every one of the avenues leading to her majesty unrelentingly closed against me, despair had driven me at last to take the present step.

"The queen raised me up with kindness, took my petition, and, perceiving that I trembled, deigned to bid me be of good cheer. She then passed on, telling me to be at ease, and assured me that due attention should be paid to the object of my request."

In the first private interview she pretends to have had with the queen, the countess relates that Marie-Antoinette said to her:

"'I have read your memorial, the object of which is to urge the minister to act and bestir himself with respect to the property which belonged to your house. Having some private reasons not to second your views . . . I cannot reconcile the desire I may have to serve you publicly, with the inclination I feel to see you in private . . . but I shall still be able to render you indirectly the services you wish to obtain from me.' . . . Her majesty concluded by presenting me with a purse."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte," pp. 11, 13.



A few days afterwards, she tells us, she was summoned to repair to the Little Trianon, between eleven and twelve o'clock at night ! when she received fresh proofs of the queen's generosity. "She presented me at parting," says the countess, "with a pocket-book containing ten thousand livres (francs) on the *caisse d'escompte*, and concluded by saying : 'We shall meet again.'"<sup>1</sup> Madame de la Motte then goes on to state that it is needless to tire the reader with a repetition of the frequent interviews she had with the queen, of whose munificence on these occasions she received numerous proofs. "The Cardinal de Rohan," she says, "marked her growing favour, and insisting that his fortune was in her hands, conjured her to let no opportunity slip of mentioning his name to his sovereign."

Let us turn now to the other side of the picture, and see what is said by persons likely to be well informed, as well as by Marie-Antoinette herself, respecting this pretended intimacy.

Lacretelle, whose truth and honesty are beyond question, says "the Countess de Valois never had the least access to this princess," and that "one cannot read this libel (the countess's Memoirs) without being convinced that the queen never had any kind of communication with these creatures, whose presence would have defiled the throne."<sup>2</sup>

The Baron de Besenval speaks of the countess in his Memoirs as "one of those creatures who live by intrigue and the sale of their charms."<sup>3</sup> Was such a person likely to have been received privately at the Trianon ? The Baron de Besenval was a regular visitor there himself, and would have heard of this strange and familiar intercourse if it had ever existed.

What does Madame Campan, first *femme de chambre* to the queen, who enjoyed the confidence of her royal mistress, and was, moreover, constantly in her company, and who, biased though she may seem to be in her favour, invariably speaks what she believes to be the truth—what does she say respecting this tissue of invention ?

"Neither the queen herself, nor any lady about her, ever had

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 291.

<sup>2</sup> "L'Histoire de France pendant le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," par C. Lacretelle, vol. vi. pp. 114, 120.

<sup>3</sup> "Mémoires du Baron de Besenval," vol. iii. p. 122.



the slightest connection with the swindler, and during her prosecution she could only point out one of the queen's servants (a man named Declos or Leclos), a page of the queen's chamber, to whom she pretended she had delivered Böhmer's Necklace . . . Declos,<sup>1</sup> on being confronted with the woman La Motte, proved that she had never seen him but once, which was at the house of the wife of a surgeon-accoucher at Versailles, and that she had not given him the Necklace." Madame Campan further states that the countess "had never even been able to make her way into the room appropriated to the queen's women." The same lady also furnishes this additional piece of testimony :

"The queen," she says, "in vain endeavoured to call to mind the features of this person, whom she had so often heard spoken of as an intriguing woman, who came frequently on Sundays to the gallery at Versailles ; and at the time when all France was taken up with the prosecution against the cardinal, and the portrait of the Countess de la Motte-Valois was publicly sold, her majesty desired me one day when I was going to Paris to buy her the engraving, which was said to be a tolerable likeness, that she might ascertain whether she could recollect in it any person whom she had seen in the gallery."<sup>2</sup>

Marie-Antoinette herself, when questioned by Louis XVI. on the subject of this intimate acquaintance, assured the king that she had never seen the woman. In a few simple words she repeats her denial when confronted with the Cardinal de Rohan, immediately preceding his arrest. And in a private letter to her sister, written at a time when the affair of the Diamond Necklace was making a great noise throughout Europe, Marie-Antoinette thus denies all previous knowledge of her pretended confidant :

"I have never seen this woman La Motte ; it seems she is an adventuress of the lowest class, with a good address and a bold air ; she has been seen two or three times on the back staircase of the Cour des Princes ; this is a scheme agreed on to deceive her dupes and to spread the belief that she is received in my closet. The Duke de Nivernois on this occasion told me that an ad-

<sup>1</sup> His depositions are signed "Desclaux."

<sup>2</sup> "Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. pp. 17, 19, 291.

venturess from Paris had made her fortune in the days of Madame de Maintenon by seating herself twice a week on the stairs; one day she found the drawing-room of that lady open; she went in, and seeing no one near she walked up to the balcony over the Place d'Armes, thus proclaiming to every one that she was in favour with Madame de Maintenon. We are surrounded in this place by persons of that class.”<sup>1</sup>

Again, at the very last, only a few hours before her head was severed from her body by the guillotine, she still firmly repudiated all knowledge of any such individual. Let us refer to the report in the *Moniteur* of the “*Procès de Marie-Antoinette*,” and see what transpired in reference to the matter.

“*The president to the accused*: Was it not at the Little Trianon that you first met with the woman La Motte?

“*The accused*: I never once saw her.

“*The president*: Was she not your victim in the business of the famous Necklace?

“*The accused*: She could not have been, since she was unknown to me.

“*The president*: So then you persist in denying that you were acquainted with her?

“*The accused*: Mine is not a system of denial; what I have said is the truth, and that I will persist in.”

Of course it was the truth; had it not been, Fouquier Tinville had abundant means of proving the contrary; all France in these days was overrun with spies and informers. The public accuser had really no facts to allege against the prisoner in regard to Madame de la Motte, and confessed he had not when ordered to bring the queen to trial. Had there been the least particle of evidence to prove Marie-Antoinette's intimacy with so abandoned a woman, the attorney-general of the Revolutionary Tribunal would have been only too glad to have brought it forward. He had not far to go, for among the witnesses actually produced were the Count d'Estaing, formerly in command at Versailles, who knew both the queen and the countess, and was a frequent dinner-

<sup>1</sup> “Correspondance Inédite de Marie-Antoinette,” par Comte P. Vogt d'Hunolstein, p. 141.

guest of the latter in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles; and Renée Sévin, for six years under-*femme de chambre* to Marie-Antoinette, yet to neither of these did he put a single question upon the subject. Again, there was Reine Millot, another old servant at Versailles, "*bonne citoyenne, excellente patriote*," who did her best to sacrifice her unhappy mistress, deposing that the Count de Coigny had told her that the queen had sent two hundred million francs to her brother, the Emperor Joseph, to enable him to make war upon the Turks, and that she would end by ruining France; and further, that she knew from different people that the queen had conceived the design of assassinating the Duke d'Orléans, which when the king heard of, he ordered her to be immediately searched, and two pistols being found upon her, he commanded her to remain in her own apartment for the space of fifteen days.<sup>1</sup> A witness such as this would have been only too eager to repeat all the scandal current at Versailles respecting the Countess de la Motte and the queen. Moreover, Count de la Motte himself was known to be living at Bar-sur-Aube at the time of the queen's trial, and could have been readily enough produced, only Fouquier Tinville was perfectly well aware that he could depose to nothing in the slightest degree incriminatory of her whose death, though already determined on, the revolutionary party would have been glad enough to have justified on such a poor pretence even as complicity in the Necklace fraud.

<sup>1</sup> "Procès de Marie-Antoinette," Paris, 1865, pp. 40, 64, 65.



## X.

1772-1774.

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL, COMMENDATOR, GRAND ALMONER, PRINCE-BISHOP LOUIS-RENÉ-ÉDOUARD DE ROHAN.

AMONG the tribe of solicitors who put faith in the report of Madame de la Motte's intimacy with Marie-Antoinette, and sought to turn it to their own advantage, certainly by far the most sanguine of them all, was her "friend" and benefactor, Louis-René-Édouard de Rohan, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, Bishop and Prince of Strasbourg, Prince of Hildesheim, Landgrave of Alsace, Grand Almoner of France, Commander of the Order of the Holy Ghost, Commendator of St. Waast d'Arras, Superior-general of the Royal Hospital of the Quinze-Vingts, Abbé of the Chaise-Dieu, Master of the Sorbonne, Member of the French Academy, &c., &c. The very man who had been wont to bestow alms upon a descendant of the house of Valois was now almost ready to cringe to the former recipient of his bounty for favour and support. This dissolute and intriguing prelate, who was destined to attain such unenviable notoriety through his connection with the Countess de la Motte, was born on the 27th of September, 1734, and at this period was consequently verging on his fiftieth year. He was, as we have already mentioned, a tall, stout, handsome-looking man, with a fresh-coloured complexion, bald forehead, and whitish grey hair. His manners were amiable; he was fluent in conversation, and though his talents, as the upshot proves, were of a very inferior order, still he was not deficient in that dexterity which goes a long way towards fitting a man for the conduct of public business—he having, with the help of his shrewd secretary, the Abbé Georgel, rather cleverly filled the post of Ambassador at the court of Vienna for between two and three years. He had been sent to that court in January, 1772, to supersede the Baron de Breteuil, thereby making a mortal enemy of that minister, now in high favour with the



sovereign. But this was not all. He had also incurred the dislike, and even hatred, of the Queen of France, partly in consequence of having repeated to the Empress Maria Theresa certain scandals current at the French court respecting the unbecoming levity of her daughter, then dauphiness—who, by-the-way, by virtue of his office of coadjutor at Strasbourg, he had had to receive on the occasion of her first entry into France—and partly in consequence of a letter written by him in an unguarded moment, wherein he reflected strongly on the duplicity of the empress with respect to Poland. In this letter he remarked that “Maria Theresa stands, indeed, with a handkerchief in one hand, weeping for the woes of Poland, but with a sword in the other, ready to cut Poland into sections, and take her share,”<sup>1</sup> an observation in which there was not only point, but far too much truth for it to pass unregarded. This letter was read and laughed over by Louis XV., and by him repeated to the Countess Dubarry at one of her *petits soupers*, and the countess, in her turn, gossiped about it, until at length the affair became a court joke and reached the ears of the dauphiness, who, whilst repressing her indignation at the time, did not fail to treasure up the circumstance in her memory.

In spite of the queen’s aversion, which, by-the-way, was fully shared by Louis XVI., the cardinal, whose ambition led him to covet the office of prime minister, fondly hoped, sooner or later, to recover his ground. When therefore he heard, as very good care was taken he very quickly should hear, that a lady who stood in certain tender relations towards himself, and was under certain pecuniary obligations to him, was in favour with the queen, the credulous dotard suspected neither deception nor exaggeration in the report; which perhaps was hardly surprising, for Nature, we are told, had given the *soi-disant* new favourite a frank and honest face in spite of her proficiency in the arts of deceit. “Without possessing the full splendour of beauty,” observes the Abbé Georgel, “the Countess de la Motte was gifted with all the graces of youth, her countenance was intelligent and attractive, and she expressed herself with fluency; moreover, *the air of truth that per-*

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoires pour servir à l’Histoire des Evénements de la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” par l’Abbé Georgel, vol. ii. p. 220.

vaded her recitals invariably carried conviction along with it." The cardinal, only too ready to be blinded and deluded, counselled his *protégée* how to proceed in order to retain and improve the position which he imagined she had already acquired, intending, without doubt, to avail himself of her interest to recover the good opinion of the queen, whose deep-rooted prejudice against him was the bane of his life.

Madame Campan speaks of the cardinal as a spendthrift, and a man of the most immoral character, whose mission to Vienna opened under the most unfavourable auspices, in consequence of the nature of the reputation which preceded his arrival at that court. "In want of money, and the house of Rohan being unable to make him any considerable advances, he obtained a patent which authorised him to borrow the sum of six hundred thousand livres (twenty-four thousand pounds) upon his benefices; nevertheless he ran into debt for upwards of another million, and thought to dazzle the city and court of Vienna by the most indecent, and, at the same time, the most ill-judged extravagance. He formed a suite of eight or ten gentlemen of names sufficiently high sounding, twelve pages equally well-born, a crowd of officers and servants, together with a company of chamber musicians, and various other retainers. But this idle pomp did not last; embarrassment and distress soon showed themselves; his people, no longer receiving pay, abused the ambassadorial privileges, and smuggled with so much effrontery that Maria Theresa, to put a stop to it without offending the court of France, was compelled to suppress the privileges in this respect of the entire diplomatic corps."<sup>1</sup>

In those days an ambassador was not only required to be an adept in duplicity, but he was expected, by means of bribery, or other modes of corruption more or less dishonourable, to make himself master of all the secrets of the court to which he was accredited. The cardinal proved himself in this respect equal to the mission with which he was intrusted. At the commencement of the year 1774 he discovered that the Austrian minister, Prince von Kaunitz, had succeeded in purchasing keys of the ciphers in which the despatches that passed between the French king and himself

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. p. 42.

and the ambassadors at Constantinople, Stockholm, Dantzic, and St. Petersburg were written. He also discovered that the court of Vienna had obtained copies of and had deciphered all the despatches sent by the Duke d'Aiguillon to the various representatives of the court of Versailles throughout Northern Europe. He learnt, too, that the main work of interception was done at Liege, Brussels, Frankfort, and Ratisbon. At these places copies of despatches were taken and forwarded to what was styled the "Cabinet of Decipherers," a department of which Baron Peckler was the head.<sup>1</sup>

How it was that the cardinal came to make this important discovery and to profit largely by it, as he eventually managed to do, is quite a piece of romance. The Abbé Georgel, at that time secretary to the French embassy at Vienna, shall tell the story in his own words.

"Returning one evening to the hôtel, the porter gave me a note carefully sealed up, and addressed to me. I read in it as follows:— 'Be to-night, between eleven and twelve, at a particular place upon the ramparts, and you will be informed of matters of the very highest importance.' An anonymous note of this tenor, sent so mysteriously, and the unseasonable hour appointed, might have appeared to some persons altogether dangerous and suspicious. But I was not aware that I had any enemies, and, desirous not to have to reproach myself with having missed an opportunity that might never occur again of promoting the king's service, I determined to attend at the appointed place. But I took some prudential precautions, by placing within a certain distance, where they could not be seen, two persons on whom I could rely, to come to my assistance upon a signal agreed on. I found at the place of meeting a man wrapped in a cloak, and masked. He put some papers into my hands, and said in a feigned undertone: 'You have my confidence; I will therefore contribute to the success of M. the Prince de Rohan's embassy. These papers will inform you of the very essential services which it is in my power to render you. If you approve of them, come again to-morrow to' another place

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Historiques et Politiques du règne de Louis XVI.," par l'Abbé Soulavie, vol. iii. p. 277, *et seq.*



which he mentioned, 'and bring me a thousand ducats.' On my return to the Hôtel de France, I hastened to examine the papers confided to me. Their contents gave me the most agreeable surprise. I saw that we had it in our power to procure twice a week copies of all the discoveries made by the secret cabinet of Vienna, which was the best served cabinet in Europe. This secret cabinet possessed in the highest degree the art of deciphering quickly the despatches of ambassadors and of the governments with whom they corresponded. I was convinced by the deciphering of our own despatches and the despatches of our court to us—even those written in the most complicated and the newest ciphers—that this cabinet had found means to intercept and obtain copies of the despatches of several European courts, through the treachery and audacity of the frontier directors and postmasters, bribed for that purpose.

"Furnished with these documents and armed with unquestionable proofs of their authenticity, I instantly went post haste to communicate them to the ambassador. I laid before him the samples of the political magazine, from which we might supply ourselves. The Prince de Rohan felt the value of it, especially to himself personally, inasmuch as this important discovery must necessarily efface the unpleasant impressions which the Duke d'Aiguillon had not failed to make upon the king's mind, by representing to him that Prince Louis, too frivolous, and too much taken up with the pursuits of pleasure, was not so watchful at Vienna as the service of the state required.

"I met the masked man the following night, and gave him the thousand ducats: when he handed to me other papers of increasing interest, and during my whole stay at Vienna he faithfully performed his promise. Our meetings took place twice a week, and always about midnight. The ambassador wisely decided that the occupation arising from this discovery should be confined to him and to myself, with an old secretary whose discretion we knew would stand any trial. The secretary was employed in copying for our court the papers of the masked man, to whom we were obliged to return them.

"A courier extraordinary was at once despatched to Versailles with the first-fruits of our newly-discovered treasure. He was



ordered not to go to bed on his way, and to carry about his person the special packet of secret despatches to the very end of his journey. A separate letter communicated the manner in which this disclosure had been made to us. Our courier returned promptly, the bearer of a despatch from the Duke d'Aiguillon, which contained this acknowledgment of the cardinal's services: 'I sincerely and feelingly share,' said the minister, 'both in the satisfaction with which the king acknowledges your services, and the credit which this discovery throws upon your mission.' From the time of this discovery an extraordinary courier was sent off to Versailles every fortnight with new communications, and always with the same precautions as before."<sup>1</sup>

Soulavie tells us it was through the Austrian ambassador at Versailles, who, like the rest of his fraternity, had a whole host of traitorous officials in his pay, that the court of Vienna got scent of what was going on. The Prince von Kaunitz, suspecting that the treachery was perpetrated in his office, had the locks of his cabinet changed, and made a point of intrusting all the most important despatches to no one except his private secretary. He even went the length of having one of his clerks, of whom he entertained some suspicion, drowned in the Danube; but all was of no avail; the masked man, according to the Abbé Georgel, redoubled his zeal at each succeeding interview.

Two months after the death of Louis XV. the cardinal was superseded in his post. He had hurried off to pay his court to the new king at Compiègne, where he was not long in becoming acquainted with the fact that the queen was his avowed enemy. He obtained an audience of Louis XVI., but it was brief, and by no means satisfactory. The king listened for a few minutes to the cardinal's explanations, and then abruptly said, "I will let you know my pleasure." As for Marie-Antoinette, she positively declined to receive him, although he had a letter from her mother the empress to deliver. The only notice she took of him was to desire that this letter might be sent to her. As a last resource he addressed a written communication to the king, which Louis XVI.

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire des Événements de la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," par l'Abbé Georgel, vol. i. p. 269, *et seq.*

did not condescend to answer. The cardinal had now no longer any doubt that his disgrace was determined upon.

Although his downfall was really to be ascribed to the joint animosity of Maria Theresa and her daughter, the grounds publicly put forward for it were these. "First, the public gallantries (at Vienna) of Prince Louis with women of the court and others of less distinction; secondly, his surliness and haughtiness towards other foreign ministers, which it was stated would have been attended with more serious consequences if the empress herself had not interfered; thirdly, his contempt for religion in a country where it was particularly necessary to show respect for it (he had been seen frequently to dress himself in clothes of different colours, assuming the hunting uniforms of various noblemen whom he visited, with so much publicity that one day in particular, during the *Fête Dieu*, he and all his legation, in green uniforms laced with gold, broke through a religious procession which impeded them, in order to make their way to a hunting party at the Prince von Paar's); and fourthly, the immense debts contracted by him and his people, which were tardily and only in part discharged.<sup>1</sup>

After the cardinal's return to Paris from his Viennese mission, although his manners may have mended somewhat, his morals remained as loose as ever. He is reported to have kept up in different quarters of the city various small establishments to which, it is said, he was in the habit of retiring to emulate in secret the vices of the Roman emperors. His conduct in public appears to have been hardly more reputable, for one day the king when hunting with the Count d'Artois in the neighbourhood of Fontainebleau, came upon Cardinal Prince Louis de Rohan with a handsome young abbé, his hair elegantly dressed and powdered, seated beside him in his carriage. The king remarked to his brother that the abbé only required a little rouge to pass for a woman, but the more quick-sighted Count d'Artois had already discovered that the pretended abbé was a woman in disguise—none other, in fact, than one of the cardinal's mistresses—the notorious Marquise de Marigny.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. i. p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc, vol. i. pp. 229, 591.

## XI.

1784.

PRETENDED MEDIATOR BETWEEN THE CARDINAL AND THE QUEEN.—  
A FORGER ON THE PREMISES.—BILLETS-DOUX BORDERED WITH  
“VIGNETTES BLEUES.”

BEFORE the close of spring in the year 1784, the Countess de la Motte has effectually built up her grand fabrication. Although she neglects no opportunity of giving out that the queen desires this pretended intimacy to be kept a profound secret, yet, like most other profound secrets, it becomes pretty generally known; the imposture is established as a reality, and the Grand Almoner of France has been caught in the net. This singularly credulous individual, weighed down with places and honours, but ambitious of more, is led to believe, quite as much by his own folly as the countess's craft, that a channel has at length been opened for his reinstatement in the queen's favour, and his elevation to the office of prime minister. All the machinery set in motion by the impostor and her confederates to make money by the abuse of the queen's name is now directed with both energy and skill upon the Prince de Rohan, whose paternal hand is employed to diffuse the charities of a kingdom upon those suppliants who best understand how to represent their wants, and whose own annual revenue exceeds a million of livres (£40,000).

Gradually, step by step, the vigilant schemer advances, her dupe's fancy and conceit outstepping the measured tread of the inventor, whose falsehoods are not poured forth fast enough to fill the wide throat of this insatiable gull. First she assures him that she has spoken and interceded for him with the queen, who listened to her with attention but evident suspicion; but that after having heard of several instances of his benevolence to herself and other persons, the royal prejudice had given way. The cardinal of course takes heart at this assurance, and waits re-



signedly for the happy progress of a negotiation which had opened so promisingly. The countess thus describes this pretended interview with Marie-Antoinette in her *Memoirs* :

"In one of my interviews with her majesty, the queen inquired how I had supported myself before I was introduced to her. This was the moment for naming my benefactor, but it required some caution, lest the queen should discover that I was deeper in his confidence and counsels than it was proper for me to appear. I attempted, if possible, to avoid giving the least cause for suspicion, and expatiated largely, in general terms, on the cardinal's beneficence, charity, and benevolence ; enumerated the services he had rendered to almost every one that applied ; that from his generosity he had acquired the esteem he merited ; and spoke with a grateful warmth of the favours he had heaped upon me.

"Her majesty regarded me with a curious and penetrating eye : she paused for some minutes, and appeared buried in thought. This was the first moment of my mentioning the cardinal's name, and I had an opportunity of reading in her majesty's face such a degree of aversion that gave me a very unfavourable omen of success : the strength of her antipathy I was then first acquainted with. At length, awakening from her reverie, she expressed her surprise at the information I had given her. She did not think the cardinal capable of such actions."<sup>1</sup>

In due time the grand almoner is informed that majesty has at last relented, having been of course won over by the countess's continuous praises of him, and by her assurances that he was far less culpable than he was represented to be by his enemies ; that he was full of penitence and remorse for any errors he might have committed ; that her majesty's aversion to him was his constant affliction ; and that his health was yielding to this sorrow.

"I am authorised by the queen," the countess one day calmly said to him, "to request you to furnish her with a written explanation of the faults imputed to you."

In compliance with this demand, the cardinal delivered to Madame de la Motte a lengthy exculpatory statement, the main purport of which was to accuse his niece, the Princess de

<sup>1</sup> *Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself*, vol. i. p. 294.



Guéménée, of having intrigued to add to his disgrace at court while pretending to act as intercessor on his behalf. From time to time the princess appears to have allured him with specious promises of his ultimate restoration to royal favour, and the kind of return she exacted for her pretended good offices may be judged of from the following passage, which, as will presently appear, Madame de la Motte did not fail to note and profit by: "The princess was sensible of the excessive joy she gave me,<sup>1</sup> and availed herself of it *to request of me the loan of a pretty considerable sum*. I would have parted with my whole fortune, thinking myself too happy in being useful to a woman to whom I was so greatly beholden. The easy compliance she had met with enticed her to make further demands, which I could not refuse, she always knowing how to accompany them with hopes, with soothing promises, and at the same time with difficulties she would find ways to overcome."<sup>2</sup> It is inconceivable how, after feeling convinced that he had been the dupe of one designing woman, the cardinal could have been such a dotard as to have been again deluded by an *intrigante* who used precisely the same arts, and who exacted from him precisely the same kind of return. Such, however, was the case.

About three weeks after the delivery of his written justification into the hands of Madame de la Motte, the grand almoner received a note, bordered with "*vignettes bleues*," and purporting to be written by Marie-Antoinette. This stated that she had read with indignation of the manner in which he had been deceived by his niece, assured him that she had forgotten all that had passed, and desired him never again to make the slightest allusion to a matter so unpleasant—a convenient way of tabooing a subject, the discussion of which might have proved extremely embarrassing to the countess, and have sooner or later exposed the fraud then being practised upon the cardinal. The note wound up with the following passage, the motive of which the reader will be at no loss to divine: "The account which the countess has given me of your

<sup>1</sup> She had informed the cardinal that the queen had deigned to accept of a white Spanish dog which the cardinal had offered to her through the princess. Of course Marie-Antoinette had done nothing of the kind.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. p. 12, Appendix.

behaviour towards her has made a stronger impression on me than all that you have written to me. I hope that you will never forget that it is to her you are indebted for your pardon."<sup>1</sup>

The plot thickens : all at once we find ourselves in deeper water. Before we had false rumours and reports ; now we have forged letters. The cardinal having received the first one as genuine, what is to prevent the success of others ? Nothing, it would seem, so long as the countess exercises her customary discretion. Letters and replies thereupon follow each other in quick succession, amounting in course of time to something like a couple of hundred in number. Of these the countess pretended she preserved copies of thirty-one, which she subsequently printed by way of appendix to her autobiography. Judging from these samples, the communications which, according to her assertions, passed between the queen and the cardinal, were not merely tender and familiar, but occasionally touched upon subjects that were positively indelicate.<sup>2</sup>

It is needless to inform the reader that, so far as the letters attributed to Marie-Antoinette are concerned, they were one and all of them vile fabrications. They were penned, in fact, by the prospective sub-lieutenant of the marshalsea, of whom we have already spoken, Rétaux de Villette, who was attached to the countess in the double capacity of "*cavalier servente*" and secretary, and whose chief occupation seems to have consisted in forging letters on gilt-edged paper, or paper bordered with blue flowers (*vignettes bleues*). His *cabinet de travail* was madame's bedchamber, and he worked at a little table by the bedside, on which was a writing-case with a stock of note-paper, such as the queen was known to be in the habit of using.<sup>3</sup> Monsieur de Villette resided regularly under the De la Motte roof, for Jeanne de Saint-Remi, Countess de Valois de la Motte, having considerable traffic in forgery, found it necessary to keep a forger on the premises, just as other people find it requisite to keep a secretary or a clerk.

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. p. 17, Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> A few of these letters are given in the Appendix to the present work.

<sup>3</sup> "Confrontation du Cardinal avec le Père Loth." The latter described the paper on which Villette wrote as being bordered with "*vignettes bleues*," and in M. Feuillet de Conches' unique collection of autographs of Marie-Antoinette are several notes written by the queen on paper with coloured borders.

If we glance behind the scenes, we cannot help being impressed by this daring woman's strength of mind, which enables her to work so calmly and leisurely while all the time the wolf is at the door. Not only has she her idle husband and herself to support, but there is at times her brother, whose pension she has sold, and her "secretary," and she not possessed of a single sou of regular income! To add to all this, she is in debt to the landlord, the tax-gatherer, and the tradespeople; duns are calling upon her every hour—duns are even waiting in the ante-room while she is dictating forged letters to Villette. Her own pension and that of her brother being utterly gone, the family have literally no bread to eat but that of charity, and the bread of charity is so scanty and bitter that the descendant of the house of Valois has become a liar and a forger, and is preparing to become a thief, in order to add to and sweeten it. And all this while, with her thread of life drawn, so to speak, to a single hair, she is the emblem of composure, advancing "stealthily, steadfastly, with Argus eye and ever-ready brain—with nerve of iron, on shoes of felt!" whilst Cardinal Prince de Rohan, her father in years, who lives in palaces surrounded by every luxury, holds one of the highest offices in the state, is superior of numerous important religious establishments and seigneur of countless manors, and has a revenue of upwards of a million livres, is feverish with impatience.

According to his usual practice, the Cardinal, with Versailles and the Little Trianon closed against him, is spending the sultry summer-time in retirement at his stately palace of Saverne, a huge building of red sandstone in the Italian style of architecture, for the most part newly erected by himself in place of a former edifice consumed by fire a few years previously. At Saverne the Cardinal Prince Louis de Rohan exercises all the authority of a petty sovereign, and keeps up a well-nigh regal state. Gentleman of high birth do not disdain his service; and such is the prodigality that rules in his establishment, that he has no less than fourteen *maîtres d'hôtel* and twenty-five *valets de chambre*!<sup>1</sup> Situated at the foot of the eastern slope of the Vosges, and almost within sight of the valley of the Rhine, Saverne has its upper and lower towns,

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires de la Baronne d'Oberkirche," vol. i.



in the former of which are situated the cathedral, the *chancellerie*, the *hôtel de la régence*, the ancient château, and, adjoining this last, the palatial residence of the once all-powerful De Rohans. The principal front of this vast building looked over charming gardens, laid out in the French style, with handsome terraces and arcades, geometrically-shaped beds of brilliant flowers, trees trimmed to pattern, green shady alleys, trellises covered with vines, arbours, statues, fountains, rivulets, broad sheets of water, islands, grottos, and kiosques, while beyond all this extended a beautiful park, at the outskirts of which was a pheasantry, bounded by a dense forest, whose glades in the pleasant autumn months were alive with *piqueurs* and packs of dogs and sportsmen in the great gold uniform of the cardinal, while the huntsman's horn might be heard incessantly resounding.

The palace, on the garden side, presented one long façade ornamented with fluted Corinthian pilasters and richly-carved cornices and mouldings, and having countless windows of a uniform character. Its somewhat unpleasing regularity was broken by a projecting centre part with a row of open columns and balustrades, which formed a kind of gallery, handsomely decorated in its different stages with ornamental friezes, statues and bas-reliefs, and having the elaborately-sculptured armorial bearings of the family of De Rohan and its many alliances prominently displayed at either end.<sup>1</sup>

The principal entrance to the episcopal palace conducted to a handsome vestibule, from whence the grand staircase led to the magnificent suite of reception rooms where the Prince de Rohan, banished from Versailles, assembled around him a little court of his own, composed of some few members of the old nobility related to his house, discontented courtiers who disliked the young queen, certain too complaisant beauties, and *petits-mâîtres* from the Paris salons, philosophers, prelates, and provincial magnates, military officers from the neighbouring garrison at Strasbourg, and the usual complement of fools and flatterers that invariably dance attendance on the powerful and the wealthy.

The once stately palace of Saverne is now-a-days divested of all

<sup>1</sup> "Saverne et ses environs," par C. G. Klein.



its former splendour. It serves alike for the *mairie*, the court of the justice of the peace, and the corn-market; and as barracks, guard-house, forage-stores, farriery, and stables for the troops composing the garrison of the town.<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of the year 1784 couriers bound for Paris would every now and then sally forth from the palace gates with bags of letters, among which there was invariably one elaborately-sealed packet addressed to the Countess de la Motte. Enclosed in this would be a letter for the queen, begging, entreating, praying for an interview at which the writer might plead his cause and regain complete possession of his royal mistress's favour. Days and weeks go by while he is waiting and watching for a response. Judge however, of the cardinal's agitation when one day the countess herself arrives unexpectedly at Saverne—having travelled post all the way from Paris—and announces to him that the long and eagerly-sought interview is at length accorded to him; that the queen has consented to a midnight meeting with him in the Park of Versailles. The countess thought, and thought rightly, that a journey of nearly three hundred miles, undertaken on purpose to be the bearer of this welcome intelligence, would give it all the greater weight, and would effectually dispel any unpleasant doubts that might perchance by this time have taken possession of the cardinal's mind.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "This refers to the year 1866. What changes the former palace may have undergone since Saverne has been under German domination I am unable to say.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoire pour le Cardinal de Rohan," p. 24.

## XII.

1784. JUNE—JULY.

### THE COUNTERFEIT QUEEN.

COUNTERFEIT *billets-doux* having been palmed off on the infatuated cardinal as genuine with such complete success, the countess now ventures on a singularly bold step, nothing less than the personation of majesty itself, and actually succeeds in foisting upon the purblind prelate *une belle courtisane* of the Palais Royal as the beautiful, high-born Marie-Antoinette.

This incident of the nocturnal interview—the most daring of the many daring schemes of which the long intrigue was composed—is so fully and clearly, and, moreover, so artlessly, described by the “*fille du monde*,” who was bribed to perform the character of Marie-Antoinette on the occasion, in her memorial published at the time of the Necklace trial, as to completely exonerate the queen from having been in any way a party to it. Prior, however, to laying this statement before the reader, we have something to say respecting the new character whom we are about to introduce upon the scene.

This young person, commonly known as Mademoiselle d’Oliva, but whose real name was Leguay Designy, was born in Paris in 1761, and was consequently younger than the queen by seven years. Although her reputation was anything but spotless, she was by no means the common creature she is ordinarily represented to have been. M. Leguay Designy, her father, had been a respectable citizen, who at his death was found to have saved money, and when her mother died, a few years before the event which rendered the daughter an object of so much notoriety, Mademoiselle Leguay Designy was left with a competent provision deposited for her in the hands of trustees. These guardians however abused their trust, and after dissipating the bulk of the young woman’s property, compromised the matter by the payment of four thousand

livres, which money she received in the early part of 1784, only a few months before the day rendered memorable by the midnight meeting in the park of Versailles.

Mademoiselle Leguay Designy, in her memorial, drawn up by her advocate, M. Blondel—who, perceiving that the very simplicity of his client was her best defence, had the sagacity to let her tell her story in her own way—thus describes how it was that she first became acquainted with the De la Mottes, husband and wife.

“In the month of June, 1784, I lodged,” she says, “in a small apartment in the Rue du Jour, in the Quartier St. Eustache.<sup>1</sup> I was not very far from the Palais Royal, where I used frequently to go of an afternoon for two or three hours with a neighbour’s child, about four years old, of whom I was very fond.

“One afternoon, in the month of July, when I was sitting in the Palais Royal, this child being along with me, I observed a stranger pass by several times; he was a tall young man, and quite alone. He looked at me fixedly, and I noticed as he came near to me that he slackened his pace as if to survey me more attentively. There was a vacant chair two or three feet from mine, in which he seated himself.

“I could not avoid bestowing my attention upon him, for his eyes kept repeatedly wandering over my person. The expression of his countenance becomes grave and earnest, and he appears agitated by a painful and anxious curiosity as he scans my entire figure very narrowly, whilst not a feature of my face escapes him.

“We met in this way in the gardens of the Palais Royal for several successive days, until at last he addressed me, and I committed the error of replying to him.

“One evening on leaving him I returned home, when I found that he had followed me without my perceiving it. Suddenly he stood before me in my apartment. He introduced himself with every sign of respectful politeness, and requested me to allow him occasionally to visit me. I could not take upon myself to deny his

<sup>1</sup> The Rue du Jour is a narrow street close to the “Halles Centrales,” and at the western end of the church of St. Eustache. It contains at the present day several *Hôtels meublés* of a seedy kind, but the “*petit hôtel Lambesc*,” where Mdle. Leguay Designy had her small apartment on the *premier étage*, no longer exists under its original name.



request, and after obtaining my consent, he was most assiduous in his calls. But I had no reason to complain of these visits, for the young man never passed the limits of propriety. He questioned me, however, with the kindest concern respecting my income and future prospects, taking a lively interest in my fate. He also spoke of powerful protectors of his own, to whom he could recommend me, and who might be able to serve me.

"Doubtless you are eager to know who this stranger was. It is time to name him ; it was M. de la Motte, who represented himself to be an officer of distinguished rank, with great expectations, and supported by illustrious patrons.<sup>1</sup>

"It was, I think, on the occasion of his ninth visit, one morning at the beginning of August, 1784,<sup>2</sup> that I observed his countenance overspread with joy and satisfaction, such as he had never exhibited before. He had, he said, the most agreeable, the most interesting things to tell me.

"‘I have just left,’ continued he, ‘a person of very great distinction, who spoke a great deal about you. I shall bring the lady to see you this evening.’

"I awaited that evening with eagerness, counting every hour and every moment, for I longed to see this lady of very great distinction.

"M. de la Motte returned at night, telling me that in a few moments I should see the person about whom he had spoken in the morning. Whereupon, and without any further explanation, he withdrew.

"Scarcely had he left me, before I saw a lady enter my chamber; she was all alone—no servant was attending her. She approached me with politeness, and with looks full of affability.

"‘Madame,’ said she, smiling, ‘you must be rather surprised at my visit, unknown to you as I am.’

"I replied that the surprise could not be otherwise than agreeable to me.

"This person was the wife of my pretended patron ; she was

<sup>1</sup> The count being, according to Rétaux de Villette, a notorious gambler, the Palais Royal, where the *salons de jeu* most abounded, would naturally have been one of his accustomed haunts.

<sup>2</sup> More probably towards the end of July.



Madame de la Motte, but she took good care not to say so then. I offered the lady a chair, she drew it herself close to my own, and sat down. Then leaning over towards me, with a look at once cautious and confiding, whilst her eye appeared to gleam with an expression of benevolent regard, she said to me, in a low voice, what I am about to relate.

“‘Confide, my dear pet, in what I am going to say, I am a gentlewoman belonging to the court.’

“At the same time she drew out a pocket-book, and having opened it, showed me several letters, which she declared to me were written to her by the queen.

“‘But, madame,’ answered I, ‘all this is a mystery to me; I cannot understand it.’

“‘You will soon understand it, my pet. I possess the queen’s full confidence; we are like hand and glove together. She has just given me another proof of this trust, by commissioning me to find her a person to do something which will be explained at the proper time. I have made choice of you, and, if you like to undertake it, I will make you a present of 15,000 livres (francs); but the present that you will receive from the queen will be much more considerable. I cannot tell you my name just yet, but you shall soon be informed who I am. If, however, you do not think my word sufficient, and desire to have security for the 15,000 livres, we will go directly to a notary’s.’”

[In the following paragraph the pen of the advocate has evidently been at work.]

“Ye simple and trustful hearts, pause for a moment after reading this artful speech from the boldest and most audacious intriguer that ever lived. Fancy yourselves in my place, deign to consider what my feelings must have been, what I must have thought and imagined, I, a poor girl of twenty-three, unacquainted with either intrigue or business. What would you have said? What would you have done under similar circumstances?

“From that moment I was no longer myself. I answered Madame de la Motte that I should be proud to be able to do anything that would be agreeable to the queen, without any motive of personal interest to prompt me.

"She replied immediately, 'The Count de la Motte will call for you to-morrow evening in a carriage, and will carry you to Versailles.'"<sup>1</sup>

The reader will not fail to observe the precision with which the countess enters on her course of action ; the quickness with which she manages to come to the point. Her husband takes a fortnight to bring about the introduction of his wife, while she settles everything at a single interview.

The next day the count, who is accompanied by Rétaux de Villette, takes Mademoiselle Leguay to Versailles at the appointed time, and leaves her with his wife in their apartments at the Hôtel de la Belle Image, kept by the Sieur Gobert, and situated in the Place Dauphine, at that time one of the most aristocratic quarters of the royal town. This place is octagonal in shape, and the houses, which range from four to five storeys high, all have some sort of pretension about them ; they have either open balustrades running along the parapets, or carved cornices with enriched mouldings surmounting the windows, or ornamental iron balconies. Most of them too have large *portes cochères*. The Place, which in Madame de la Motte's days was a large open space, where the public sedan-chairs—the *chaises bleues* and the *brouettes*—used to ply for hire, is to-day laid out as a flower garden, and has in the centre a bronze statue of General Hoche, after whom the Place is now named. The house where the countess lodged was formerly known as "La Belle Image," but it no longer preserves its sign. It is, however, easily recognisable, being the first house (No. 8)<sup>2</sup> in the angle on the right hand, on entering the Place from the Rue Hoche. All the apartments, with the exception of the attics, must have been of a superior class. Now-a-days the ground floor is appropriated to a "Magasin Anglais," where English cutlery, and needles and pins, and reels and balls of cotton, and patent medicines and pickles, and old brown Windsor soap, and biscuits are exposed for sale. To return, however, to Mademoiselle Leguay, whose memorial thus proceeds :

"It was only then I learnt the name and condition of Madame

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire pour la Demoiselle Leguay d'Oliva," p. 8, *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> "Histoire anecdotique des Rues de Versailles, par J. A. Le Roi.

de la Motte, that she was the wife of Count de la Motte, that she went by the title of Countess de Valois at Versailles, and that the queen used to write to her in that name."

The *belle courtesane* of the Palais Royal, whose resemblance to Marie-Antoinette is said to have been singularly striking,—she was remarkable for the elegance of her figure, had blue eyes and chestnut-coloured hair<sup>1</sup>—is now dressed and tricked out in coquettish *négligé*—a white robe *en chemise*, bordered and lined with rose colour, and a white lace hood—for the famous interview which the Cardinal de Rohan had so earnestly solicited of the queen, with whom the miserable dupe flattered himself he had been all this while corresponding. The memorial continues :

"Madame de la Motte delivered to me a small note, folded in the usual way, but without telling me either what it contained or to whom it was addressed, or even by whom it was written. Neither she nor her husband spoke to me on the subject. Madame de la Motte merely said, 'I will take you this evening into the park, and you will deliver this letter to a great nobleman whom you will meet there.'"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Deuxième Mémoire pour le Sieur Bette d'Etienneville, ' p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoire pour la Demoiselle Leguay d'Oliva," p. 16.

## XIII.

1784. JULY.

THE MIDNIGHT INTERVIEW.—“YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS.”

THE memorial of the Demoiselle Leguay Designy thus proceeds:—

“Between eleven and twelve o’clock I went out with Monsieur and Madame de la Motte. I had on a white mantle and a white lace hood. I do not remember whether I carried a fan in my hand or not; I cannot say for certain. The small note was in my pocket.

“They took me into the park; there a rose was put into my hand by Madame de la Motte, who said to me: ‘You will give this rose, along with the letter, to the person who shall present himself to you, and say to him these words:—You know what this means? The queen will be there to see how your meeting passes off; she will speak to you. She is there yonder, and will be close behind you. You shall presently speak to her yourself.’

“These last words made such an impression on me, that I trembled from head to foot. I could not help telling them so: I observed to them that I did not know I was to speak to the queen. I asked them, in a stammering voice, what was the proper mode of form of speech. . . M. de la Motte answered me: ‘You must always say, Your majesty.’

“I need hardly, I think, break off here to declare that, far from having had the honour of speaking to the queen, or her having done me the honour to speak to me, I did not even see her at all. . .

“We were still walking along when M. de la Motte met a man, to whom he said: ‘Ah! is that you?’ . . . Afterwards, when I dined with the La Mottes, I recognised in Villette, their friend, the same person who was thus addressed by M. de la Motte. . . .

“Madame de la Motte then accompanied me to a hedge of yoke elms, leaving me there whilst she went to fetch the great nobleman to whom I was to speak.



"I remained waiting . . . The noble unknown came up, bowing as he approached me, whilst Madame de la Motte stood aside a few paces off, and appeared to watch the scene. I knew not who the great nobleman was, and although the Cardinal de Rohan now acknowledges that he was the person, I am still ignorant upon the point.

"It was a dull night, not a speck of moonlight ; nor could I distinguish anything but those persons and objects which were familiar to me. It would be quite impossible for me to describe the state I was in. I was so agitated, so excited, so disconcerted, and so tremulous, that I cannot conceive how I was able to accomplish even half of what I had been instructed to do.

"I offered the rose to the great nobleman, and said to him, ' You know what this means,' or something very similar. I cannot affirm whether he took it or let it fall. As for the letter it remained in my pocket ; I had entirely forgotten it.

"As soon as I had spoken, Madame de la Motte came running up to us, saying in a low hurried voice : ' Quick, quick, come away !'

"I left the stranger, and after proceeding a few steps found myself with M. de la Motte, whilst his wife and the unknown went off together and were lost to our view. Count de la Motte conducted me back to the hotel, where we sat talking together until the return of his lady.

"She came home about two in the morning, when I explained to her that I had forgotten to give the note. I was afraid she would have scolded me for this negligence, but instead of doing so she evinced the greatest satisfaction, assuring me she had just left the queen, and that her majesty was in the highest degree delighted with my performance."<sup>1</sup>

Such appears to have been the famous scene in the park of Versailles at midnight, when the Prince de Rohan, deluded by an artful woman, was fain to believe that he had been honoured with an interview with the Queen of France, and might soon expect to be openly received at court. The countess knew perfectly well that the cheat would run the risk of being detected if the dialogue were suffered to proceed too far, she therefore frightened away her dupes almost as soon as she had brought them together.

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire pour la Demoiselle Leguay d'Oliva," p. 16, *et seq.*

The Countess de la Motte's own account of this interview in the park of Versailles, though at variance with that given by Mademoiselle d'Oliva, nevertheless agrees sufficiently with it to prove that the statement of the latter was perfectly sincere. The countess alleges that the idea of practising this deception upon the cardinal originated with Marie-Antoinette herself—that the choice of the actress who was to personate her, the place appointed for the interview, the young girl's embarrassment before the meeting, were all known at the time to the queen, who was present in an adjoining arbour.

Nay, more. According to the same account, the Cardinal de Rohan was also privy to the trick played upon himself, and connived at the deceit in order to humour her majesty. Madame de la Motte's narrative of the transaction is too long to be transcribed throughout, but it concludes in this manner:—

"The poor girl was dressed and adorned like a shrine. . . . Judging from the questions she had put to me since her arrival at Versailles, it was easy to see that she expected some great adventure, and had made her preparations accordingly. . . . Nothing could be more diverting than the embarrassment of this creature, whose real anxiety was about the issue, since she knew she was going to play her part before the queen.

"The scene was the arbour at the lower end of the grass-plot. This arbour is encompassed on its left-hand path by a hedge of hornbeam, supported by a strong lattice-work fence. At a distance of three feet from the inner part of the arbour is a second hedge, and the space between the two quicksets forms a walk which leads round the enclosure without conducting to the arbour itself.

"At the hour appointed I gave the signal by putting into Mademoiselle d'Oliva's hand the rose which Marie-Antoinette had told me to deliver to the cardinal through her means. Having placed her at her post, I withdrew. The queen was not ten paces from me. I was distressed by d'Oliva's timidity, and the queen doubtless experienced the same feeling, for in spite of all her reserve and watchfulness she could not contain herself, but cried out: 'Take courage. Don't be afraid!' D'Oliva admitted this in her examination. The cardinal having come up, the conversation began.

"The cardinal, whose mind was at ease, since he was in the

secret, exerted himself to compose the poor girl, by putting none but simple questions to her, and saying courteous things. What chiefly disconcerted her was, that he spoke of former errors forgiven, of his gratitude, and made fine promises for the future. Of all this she understood nothing, answering Yes or No at random. But the cardinal took advantage of these monosyllables to dwell upon his happiness with exaggeration, saying the prettiest things in the world . . . raising her foot at the close of this speech, and respectfully kissing it. It was then Mademoiselle d'Oliva gave him the rose, which he placed against his heart, protesting that he would preserve this token all his life, and calling it the rose of happiness.

"Everything having been said that was to be said, I came forward hurriedly, and announced that Madame and the Countess d'Artois were approaching the spot. Every one vanished with lightning-like rapidity. D'Oliva returned to the seat where my husband was expecting her, the cardinal having rejoined the Baron de Planta, whom he had left at some distance on the watch, came, accompanied by him, to me, and induced me to follow him beyond the avenue, behind which he stopped to see the queen pass. Having caught sight of her as she was stealing out from the corner of the grass-plot and taking the walk leading to the terrace, he urged me to follow her majesty, and try to ascertain whether she was satisfied. Accordingly I did follow her, with light measured steps, and having overtaken her at the entrance to the château, she made me go in along with her, told me in substance that she had been much diverted, paid me a few compliments on my own account, and enjoined me not to tell the cardinal that I had seen her that evening."<sup>1</sup>

In this account there is much that is false, and but little that is true. A counterfeit queen, and no other, was present at the interview. The cardinal was imposed upon by the trick to which of course he was not privy; and having left the park with the full conviction that he had spoken to his sovereign, was committed to the tender mercies of the countess and her confederates, who quickly proceeded to plunder him of his money.

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte," p. 52, *et seq.*



## XIV.

1784. JULY—NOV.

A GOLDEN HARVEST.—HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF.—BARONESS D'OLIVA  
IS GIVEN THE COLD SHOULDER.

THE evening following that on which the cardinal was so cleverly duped, young Beugnot happening to find himself in the neighbourhood of the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, looked in at the countess's hôtel on the chance of finding her at home. At this period it was no longer a spacious *appartement* that she rented, but the entire house; and yet, with the view of deceiving the cardinal, on whose bounty she was now in a large measure dependent, whenever he called upon her she used invariably to receive him in some mean apartment on one of the upper floors.<sup>1</sup> "I was told," says Beugnot, "that the master and mistress were absent, and that only Mademoiselle Colson was within. This made me the more inclined to stay. Mademoiselle Colson was a relation of Madame de la Motte's, whom madame had qualified for and raised to the rank of *dame de compagnie*. She was wanting neither in wit nor malice, and whenever I met her we always made a point of laughing together at the foolishness and extravagance of the heads of the house. They used to tell her nothing; nevertheless she managed to find out everything. 'I think,' she remarked to me on this occasion, 'that their royal highnesses are occupied with some grand project. They pass their time in secret counsels, to which the first secretary (Villette) is alone admitted. His reverence the second secretary (Father Loth) is consequently reduced to listening at the door: he makes three journeys a day to the Rue Vieille-du-Temple (to the Palais-Cardinal), without guessing a single word of the messages they confide to him. The monk is inconsolable at this, since he is as curious as an old devotee.'

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire pour le Cardinal de Rohan."



"We passed two hours in thus slandering our neighbours and in making guesses and prophesying. When I wished to leave, Mademoiselle Colson pointed to the clock: it was midnight, and there was no chance of finding a *voiture* on the stand. Since I had remained so long, the only thing to do now, she said, was to await the return of Madame de la Motte, who would send me home in her carriage. I consented. Between twelve and one o'clock we heard the sound of a vehicle entering the court, and saw alight from it Monsieur and Madame de la Motte, Villette, and a woman from twenty-five to thirty years of age—a blonde, very pretty, and of a remarkably fine figure. The two women were dressed with elegance, but simplicity; the men wore *dress-coats*, and had the air of having just returned from a country party. They began by joking me on my *tête-à-tête* with Mademoiselle Colson, and spoke of the regret we must both have felt at having been so soon disturbed. They talked any amount of nonsense together, laughed, hummed, and seemed as if they could not keep their legs still. The stranger shared the common mirth, but she restrained herself within due bounds, and displayed a certain timidity. They seated themselves at table, the merriment continued, it increased, and finally became noisy. Mademoiselle Colson and I wore dull and astonished looks, such as one is forced to put on in the presence of very gay people when one is ignorant of what they are laughing at. Meanwhile the party indulging in this excess of hilarity seemed inconvenienced by our presence, as it prevented them from speaking openly of the subject of their mirth. M. de la Motte consulted Villette as to whether there would be any risk in speaking. Villette replied that 'he did not admit the truth of the adage that one is betrayed only by one's own people; in fact, anybody and everybody were ready to betray you, and discretion——' Here Madame de la Motte, by whose side the first secretary was sitting at table, suddenly put her hand on his mouth, and said in an imperative tone: 'Hold your tongue; M. Beugnot is too upright a man for your confidence.' I give her own words without changing a syllable. The compliment would have been a flattering one if the countess had not been ordinarily in the habit of using the words 'upright man' and 'fool' as though they were synonymous.

"Madame de la Motte, following her usual practice whenever I

was present, turned the conversation upon Bar-sur-Aube and on my family, and inquired when I contemplated returning thither. Every one was wishing the supper to come to an end. I asked Madame de la Motte to lend me her horses to take me home. She raised only a slight difficulty: it was necessary that she should send home the stranger, and eventually decided that the one living farthest off should set down the other on the way. I objected to this arrangement, and asked permission of the lady to escort her to whatever quarter she lived in, expressing my regret at the same time that however distant this might be, it would still be too near. This woman's countenance had at the first glance caused me that kind of uneasiness which one feels when one is conscious of having seen a person before, but cannot remember when or where. I addressed several questions to her on our way, but was unable to draw anything out of her; either Madame de la Motte, who had spoken to her in private before her departure, had recommended her to be discreet with me, or, what seemed more probable, she had naturally more inclination for holding her tongue than for talking. I set down my silent companion in the Rue de Cléry. The uneasiness which I felt in her presence was, I afterwards called to mind, due to her striking resemblance to the queen. The lady proved to be no other than Mademoiselle d'Oliva, and the mirth of my companions was occasioned by the complete success of the knavish trick which they had played off only the night before in the park of Versailles upon the Cardinal de Rohan."<sup>1</sup>

This meeting, at which the cardinal was so cleverly fooled, took place, be it remembered, either at the end of July—the countess fixes it on the 28th—or at the commencement of August. His eminence the cardinal was so much elated with his good fortune, in having thus recovered, as he hoped, the favour of the queen, and felt so well assured that he was now in a fair way of becoming prime minister, the great object of his ambition, that the Countess de la Motte resolved at once to reap the first-fruits of his fond hallucination. So great was her decision of character, so thorough her assurance, so precise and prompt her mode of action,

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoires du Comte Beugnot, vol. i. p. 67, *et seq.*”

that before many days had elapsed she had applied for, by means of a billet bordered with *vignettes bleues*, penned of course by the forger Villette—and obtained the moderate sum of 50,000 livres, in the queen's name, assuring her dupe that the queen required the loan for certain charitable purposes.<sup>1</sup> Ere another three months had gone by, by the aid of another forged billet purporting to have been penned by the queen, madame succeeded in obtaining 100,000 livres more. Both these amounts she received at the hands of the cardinal's equerry, the Baron de Planta. Thus the Prince de Rohan, who in the month of July had been duped by an interview with a counterfeit queen, had been swindled, ere the year had gone by, out of no less a sum than 150,000 livres, or £6,000 sterling.

This is all the more extraordinary, and only proves the intensity of the infatuation under which the old dotard must have been labouring, for no very long time previously there had been much talk within the purlieus of the court of a daring act of swindling, perpetrated by means of a scandalous misuse of the queen's name, which ought to have put him on his guard. It seems that one Béranger, a *fermier-général* had been induced to advance a sum of 200,000 livres, to a certain Madame Cahouet de Villers, a lady said to be in attendance on the queen, for the use as he believed of her royal mistress. When first the lady applied to him, M. Béranger observed that he should be proud to furnish the sum required, provided her majesty would condescend to say one word to him—only one little word. But the lady only laughed at his unreasonable demand. If the queen, she said, chose to apply in so open a manner, of course the contents of every strong box in the kingdom would be at her disposal. Then where would be the merit of lending so small a sum on such security?

Poor Béranger was ashamed of himself for having been so unreasonable, and consented to lend the money if the queen would only show him by a look, or even by a nod, that she desired it. This compact was agreed upon.

A few days afterwards, therefore, when the queen with her

<sup>1</sup> In the cardinal's first "Mémoire" he states the sum to have been sixty thousand livres, but at his examination he fixed it at fifty thousand.



train of ladies had to pass along the famous *Galérie des Glaces* at Versailles on some occasion of pleasure, the cautious *fermier-général* posted himself in a quiet corner where he could be seen, and by-and-by Marie-Antoinette swept by full of "nods and becks and wreathed smiles,"—cunningly provoked by some smart observations made by Madame Cahouet de Villers, and which the delighted financier applied entirely to himself. A few hours afterwards the two hundred thousand francs were handed to the lady in question. The duped *fermier-général*, who, when the affair came to be commonly known, was toasted as a gallant financier at all parties and in all societies for a month or two afterwards, ultimately put the affair into the hands of the police, and my lady was arrested and sent to Sainte-Pélagie, whilst her husband was brought to ruin through having to reimburse the *fermier-général* the amount of which he had been defrauded.

The above transpired in 1777. Five years later another imposture of a somewhat similar character was brought to light, but owing to its having been comparatively harmless in its results, it did not make any particular noise. A female boasted that she was honoured with the confidence of the queen, and exhibited letters—sealed with a seal belonging to Marie-Antoinette which had been stolen off a table in the apartment of the Duchess de Polignac—inviting her to Trianon. She gave out that she could influence the favour of the Princess de Lamballe, and pretended that she had been the means of disarming the resentment of the Princess de Guéménée (the Cardinal de Rohan's niece) and Madame de Chimay against Madame de Roquefeuille. Here we have the same falsehoods, the same sort of dupes, the same farce, and, what is strangest of all, the same name; for the impostor of 1782 was also named De la Motte!—Marie-Josephe-Françoise Waldburg-Frohberg, wife of Stanislas-Henri-Pierre de la Motte, formerly administrator and inspector of the royal college of La Flèche.<sup>1</sup> Thus does history, even in its most insignificant byways, repeat itself.

For some time after the incident of the midnight interview, Mademoiselle Leguay Designy was a constant visitor at the De la Mottes' both at Paris and Versailles, and subsequently at their

<sup>1</sup> "Histoire de Marie-Antoinette," par E. et J. de Goncourt, p. 202.



country house at Charonne ; for immediately the countess had gathered the first-fruits of her successful fraud a *petite maison de campagne* was added to their other establishments. The demoiselle of the Palais Royal was presented to the somewhat mixed company she met on these occasions under the title of the Baroness d'Oliva, which the countess had herself conferred upon her, deriving, it is supposed, "Oliva" from "Olisva," an anagram of "Valois." We learn from her that at the De la Motte table, which was served, by-the-way, by footmen in elegant liveries, there were to be seen officers of rank, such as the Baron de Villeroy, chevaliers of St.-Louis and of Malta, retired notaries and their wives, a relative of madame's, one Valois, a bootmaker, Rétaux de Villette, the countess's secretary, and Father Loth, her *homme d'affaires*,—altogether a tolerably free-and-easy sort of society, we have no manner of doubt.

On one occasion the Baroness d'Oliva accompanied the Countess de la Motte, the Baron de Villeroy, and Rétaux de Villette to the Théâtre Français to see Beaumarchais' comedy, "The Marriage of Figaro," then running its hundred nights ; but as time wore on, the countess became less pressing in her invitations, and the intercourse between the two ladies grew gradually less intimate, until some time in the ensuing November, when the Countess de la Motte and the Baroness d'Oliva were no longer on visiting terms. With regard to the 15,000 livres which the counterfeit queen was to have received for her single night's performance, and on the strength of which brilliant engagement she had contracted debts which were a source of great future embarrassment to her, this is what she says to the countess in her "Mémoire :"—

"Some days after your return from Versailles, you and your husband came at midnight in a *voiture de place* to the Rue de Jour, and gave me four hundred livres on account.

"On another day you came to me in the evening in your carriage, having only your footman with you, and gave me seven golden louis.

"Another day you drove up to my door in your carriage and sent your footman to inquire for me. I came down and saw Father Loth and the Baron de Villeroy with you in the carriage. I asked you for four hundred livres, which I wanted to pay to Gentil, my

upholsterer. Some days afterwards, Father Loth called for me, and we went together to Gentil and paid him the money.

“On another occasion your friend Villette brought me three hundred livres from you.

“Another day I sent my servant to you, according to previous arrangement, when you paid her three thousand francs in notes of one thousand francs each.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus it will be seen that she was only paid 4,268 of the 15,000 livres promised to her, and that by bit-by-bit instalments. Schemers and sharpers, if they had gold mines at their disposal, would never pay in any other way.

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoire pour la Demoiselle Leguay d'Oliva,” p. 34.

## XV.

1784. Nov.

## GRAND DOINGS AT BAR-SUR-AUBE.

THE sudden possession of a large sum of money produced in the countess an invincible desire to return for a time to Bar-sur-Aube, where a few years previously she had suffered so much poverty, but where she could now display a little pomp. Late in the autumn of 1784, young Beugnot received a very amiable letter from Madame de la Motte, in which she announced to him that having several days to spare, she was about to spend them at Bar-sur-Aube with her friends. "She informed me, in an easy off-hand manner," observes the count, "that she had sent in advance her carriage and saddle-horses, which would be five days on the road, as she had been recommended not to fatigue them, and that she herself would arrive two days afterwards. She apprised her sister-in-law, Madame de la Tour, of her coming in much the same terms, and gave her certain particular directions as to the lodging of herself and suite. Madame de la Tour came to me quite bewildered, and asked me what it all meant, to which I replied that I was as much in the dark as she was. Having compared letters, we agreed that there was a mystification of the worst kind about the affair, but resolved that we would not be duped, and that no preparations should be made for lodging the princess and her suite, and moreover that we would both preserve strict silence with reference to the letters we had received.

How great was our joint astonishment when on the appointed day we beheld a large heavily-laden waggon, drawn by a fine team, and followed by two led horses of great value, drive into the town. A steward who arrived with the waggon instantly gave orders for more provisions than would have sufficed to victual the best house in the town for a period of six months. People stared at each other when they met in the streets, and wondered what this

new chapter in the 'Arabian Nights' could possibly mean, and were still wondering when the Count and Countess de la Motte, preceded by two outriders in handsome liveries, drove leisurely through the main street of Bar-sur-Aube in a very elegant *berline*." <sup>1</sup> Two years before they had left the place with borrowed money and no other clothes but those they had on; now they returned in their own carriage, with their couriers and saddle-horses, and actually required a waggon to convey their wardrobe!

The town of Bar-sur-Aube, on the banks of the river, the name of which it bears, is built partly on the slope of a mountain and partly in a valley, and has on its mountain side the remains of some extensive Roman fortifications said to have been constructed by Cæsar during his invasion of Gaul. In by-gone times the town was encompassed by a massive stone wall, and had its moats, ramparts, and four ancient gateways, with a garrison of arquebusiers and militiamen. Its fortifications, however, have been long since demolished, and pleasant gardens now occupy their site. At the present day Bar-sur-Aube boasts several ancient churches and chapels containing handsome carved altar-pieces, and many curious antique monuments, and has also its convents, hospitals, college, and theatre.

The one object of historical interest that commonly attracts the attention of strangers is the little Gothic chapel in the centre of the old stone bridge of seven arches which spans the river Aube, built to mark the spot where, upwards of four centuries since, Charles VII. caused the Bastard de Bourbon, chief of the gang of *écorcheurs* (flayers)—so called because they stripped the unfortunate wretches that chanced to fall into their hands of every particle of clothing, and who had for a long time ravaged the Champagne—to be sewn up in a sack and drowned in the river beneath. In the old parts of the town the houses are chiefly of wood, and some of the more picturesque among them have large figures of saints forming their supports. Most of those erected during the last eighty or ninety years, however, are built entirely of stone. The outskirts of Bar-sur-Aube are planted with trees, and laid out in public walks, gardens, and orchards; beyond which a chain of low hills,

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. pp. 33, 34.



covered with vines or dense plantations of foliage, gives a picturesque aspect to the surrounding country. Owing to the favourable situation of the town and the productive nature of the adjacent districts, Bar-sur-Aube does an extensive trade in various kinds of grain, horses, cattle, wine, brandy, fruit, wool, leather, linen, iron, glass, pottery, and stone and timber for building purposes.

Bar-sur-Aube has something of a history of its own, for it has been the scene of several stirring historical events. It was occupied by the Romans during their invasion of Gaul, was ravaged by Attila, and was pillaged by our own Edward III. in 1360. About four centuries later the inhabitants of Bar-sur-Aube welcomed with great display Louis the Well-Beloved when he passed through the town on his return from the siege of Fribourg. In January, 1814, the Allies, then marching upon Paris, appeared before Bar-sur-Aube, and after a series of hard-fought engagements forced Marshal Mortier, who held the town, to beat a rapid retreat under cover of the night. While in the occupation of the Allies, a conference of the ministers of the different powers was held at Bar-sur-Aube, when Lord Castlereagh resolutely refused all subsidies to the vacillating Bernadotte unless he agreed to support Marshal Blucher with two *corps d'armée*, and so enable the Allies to continue their march upon Paris. At this period there were three crowned heads, the Emperors of Russia and Austria, and the King of Prussia, installed in comparatively humble lodgings in this second-rate provincial town. After the battle of Montmirail, on the 11th of February, the Allies, who were retreating, turned and made a stand, and compelled the French army to retire across the river Aube. On this occasion the town was twice taken and retaken after several severe engagements. In the year following, about three weeks after the battle of Waterloo, the Allies, to the number of 200,000 strong, again appeared before Bar-sur-Aube. This time there was no enemy to face them, so they quietly took possession of the place, and levied heavy contributions on the inhabitants, leaving a garrison of a couple of thousand men behind them, when they pursued their unopposed march upon Paris.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Essais Historiques sur la Ville de Bar-sur-Aube," etc., par J. F. G., and "Histoire de Bar-sur-Aube," par L. Chevalier.

The De la Mottes spend several weeks at Bar-sur-Aube, give grand dinner and supper parties to those who consent to visit them, discharge all their debts with the cardinal's money, and assume all the airs of genuine nobility. Most of the inhabitants eat their meat and drink their wine without instituting any curious inquiries as to the source of their strange prosperity ; but there was one whose piercing intelligence penetrated every outward vanity, whose keen eye discerned the truth then more distinctly than others have done since, after the exposure of a long trial by the Court of Parliament, and the still more searching investigations of fifty historians. This sagacious man was M. de la Tour, who had married the count's sister. When he dined at the De la Motte table, the countess herself, to whom all others submitted, quailed beneath his cutting sarcasms.

"I chanced to be alone with M. de la Tour," says Beugnot, "on the day of Madame de la Motte's arrival. 'Am I not a thousand times right,' said he to me, 'when I assert that Paris contains the worst persons in the world? In what other place, I ask you, would this little vixen and her big lanky husband have been able to obtain by swindling the things which they are displaying before our astonished eyes? Your good father excepted'—Beugnot's father, it will be remembered, had lent the De la Mottes a thousand livres a few years previously—'whom would they have found here willing to lend them a crown? and yet in half an hour they have unpacked more silver plate than there is in the whole town besides, not even excepting the chalices and ornaments of the altar.' . . . 'Do you not know,' remarked I, 'that Madame de la Motte is protected by the queen?' 'I'll say nothing as to the queen's protection,' replied La Tour. 'Between you and me, the wife of our lord the king is not the most prudent person in the world ; still she is not such a fool as to have anything to do with people of their stamp, I warrant.'"

The evening after the De la Mottes' arrival they gave a supper to a few intimate friends, which, according to Beugnot, would have been considered magnificent for any kind of guests even in Paris. "Although the town of Bar-sur-Aube," observes he, "is one of the most ancient cities of the Gauls, never perhaps had such luxury been seen in it before, not even when Cæsar did it the honour of

stopping there to hang—as they say—the mayor and councillors of that epoch. Faithful to an understanding we had previously come to, La Tour and I ate with good appetites, and without taking particular notice of anything, as though, in fact, we were both accustomed to such festivities. We kept the conversation in our own hands, taking care to confine it to subjects which rendered it difficult for the most expert talker to interpose a remark in praise of any of the things spread before us. M. de la Motte did not like this ; he wished to make us admire the dinner-service, which was of a new pattern, and of very fine workmanship. La Tour contended that services of this kind had been known for a very long time, but had gone out on account of their clumsiness. The *nil admirari* was persevered in with respect to everything, and to the very end.

“At last Madame de la Motte thought she had found grace in our eyes in praising a fowl, one of the finest which had just been removed from the table, informing us at the same time that she had ordered the courier to bring her a supply of this kind of poultry so long as she remained at Bar-sur-Aube, because to her taste ordinary country fowls were not eatable. ‘I ask your pardon, madam,’ interposed La Tour, in a serious tone, ‘but I am by no means of your opinion. I consider a country capon such as you have been speaking of, when properly fattened, to be vastly superior to all your Normandy and Mans cocks and pullets, the flesh of which is soft, insipid, and dripping with fat. But after the capon has been fed on a good plan, it must be roasted in a proper manner, and for this purpose I care little about the jack. I very much prefer to have the spit turned by a boy of the family, or even by a dog.’

“Madame de la Motte lost patience at the sort of honour paid to her by her husband’s relation before four tall footmen who had been brought from Paris clothed in liveries covered with gold lace. ‘Sir,’ said she to La Tour, in a spiteful manner, ‘I feel edified at your preference ; it is the result of a country taste which we know you carry to its fullest extent.’ ‘I agree with you there, madam,’ replied La Tour ; ‘country taste or family taste are much the same, and you know, madam, I value one just as much as I do the other.’



"This conversation shortened supper. 'How do you think I have paid my score?' inquired La Tour of me in a low tone of voice. 'You have been almost too liberal,' replied I. 'Not at all; only I was resolved to put down both husband and wife should they have the impertinence to ask me to admire anything. The masquerade which has commenced this evening is a sort of triumph for these people, and I reserve for myself the part of the soldier who on the way tells wholesome truths to the hero of the festival!'"<sup>1</sup>

Madame de la Motte called Beugnot into her room, and began complaining to him of the insolence of her husband's brother-in-law. "She told me," says Beugnot, "that her fortune had changed, that she was now in a good position, both as regarded herself and those belonging to her, and that we were all interested in adopting a different manner towards her. She hinted something of the very high connection she was keeping up at Versailles, and ended by remarking that she did not think she could remain with us the fortnight she had promised herself. I proffered her a first example of the new style of behaviour which she desired by not asking her a single question. I merely undertook to beg her brother-in-law to be more prudent for the future, without, however, anticipating much success from my intervention."

The third day of the countess's sojourn at Bar-sur-Aube was occupied by her in paying visits to people in the neighbourhood. She dressed herself out with all the taste which can result from an excess of magnificence, her robes being of the finest Lyons embroidery, and she herself sparkling with diamonds. She had, moreover, a complete set of topazes, which she also took care to display. "She made herself," says Beugnot, "almost ridiculously engaging and familiar with the neighbouring nobility and gentry. Great and small were alike enchanted with her. They returned her visits, but when she wished to go further, and give some little fêtes, the respectable women of the place excused themselves under various pretexts, and Madame de la Motte found herself reduced to the young men and the women of her husband's family, so thorough was the respect for manners at this time in a little provincial town.

<sup>1</sup> An evident allusion to the ancient Roman triumphs.



‘Madame de la Motte,’ said these good ladies to me, ‘is a charming woman, and we like her very much ; but why do you wish us to give our girls ideas of which they have no need, and which will perhaps awaken in them desires they can never gratify?’

“I was wanting,” resumes Beugnot, “neither in respect nor discretion towards Madame de la Motte. She seemed to have completely forgotten our old relations, and on this point I was in unison with her. I had become to her simply a well-bred man with whom she could speak on any subject. She told me of the secret vexations she endured through the deplorable position of her husband’s family. I consoled her as well as I could, always observing to her that a residence in a little town was in her case quite a mistake—that she ought to have an hôtel at Paris and a château in the country. She replied that she did not wish to buy land, because she was about to obtain the estates belonging to her family, on which she proposed to build. The hôtel in Paris she allowed to pass without notice, but she admitted that she wished to possess one at Bar-sur-Aube, where she could spend the summer months until her projected château was built. I took the liberty of opposing this idea of purchasing a house at Bar-sur-Aube, and maintained that it would be in far better taste to inhabit a cottage while the château was being built by its side ; but Madame de la Motte, who had already received many valuable lessons on this subject, did not the less persist in her desire to display her magnificence in those places which had been witnesses of her former misery. She purchased, in spite of my remonstrances, a house at Bar-sur-Aube, for which she paid twice as much as it was worth, and then gave it up to architects, who considered it their duty to commit all the stupidities which the property admitted of, and a few more.”<sup>1</sup>

“As the period of the countess’s sojourn at Bar-sur-Aube drew to a close, people grew angry with those who had held aloof from visiting her. M. de la Tour alone underwent no change. I had begged of him to consider the notable alteration which opulence, though sudden, had wrought in the manners and behaviour of both the count and countess. ‘I half agree with you,’ replied he.

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoires du Comte Beugnot,” vol. i. p. 35, *et seq.*

‘The wife is a hussy who has gained in penetration ; but the husband has lost in every way—he left us a fool and comes back to us a coxcomb. I persist in thinking badly of them, and even in speaking badly of them, so long as they do not reveal to me by what honest means they have acquired in the short space of six months what we now know them to be possessed of. Whom will they or you persuade that the king, the queen, the Count d’Artois, the *contrôleur-général*—in a word, I know not what powerful persons—have thrown heaps of gold to people who simply asked for bread ? The age I know is fertile in extravagance, but not exactly of this kind. Husband and wife have spread a little report around that madame is in favour with the queen. I have noticed them at this for the last fortnight, and if they had mentioned a single word of it in my presence, I had a little story ready for them about the Countess de Gazon<sup>1</sup> and the Queen of Congo with which I should have made all the lookers-on laugh at their expense.

“ ‘My dear friend,’ continued La Tour, ‘they are altogether far too impertinent, and it is really shameful that people should be duped so cheaply. Believe every word they say if you please, but for my part I adhere to what I know. Now I know, through you, that madame has relations with the Cardinal de Rohan, since she has been conveyed five or six times to his eminence’s hôtel at your expense. Possibly she has since been transported there on her own light foot. Of all the acquaintances of this fine lady, the Cardinal de Rohan is the only one to whom prodigality on a grand scale is not impossible. There are then two conclusions—either he has supplied the money for all that we see, or else it has been stolen from him. I ask your pardon for the second horn of my dilemma, but only on condition that you grant me the first ; and yet I confess I can only with great difficulty understand how a little village hussy like her can have succeeded in seducing a prince, a prelate, and a scape-grace of such importance.”<sup>2</sup>

A few days before her departure from Bar-sur-Aube the countess

<sup>1</sup> A pun upon *La Motte*.

<sup>2</sup> “Mémoires du Comte Beugnot,” vol. i. p. 41, *et seq.*

placed in the hands of young Beugnot a rouleau of fifty louis in discharge of certain small loans which he had at various times accommodated her with. "I explained to her," remarks Beugnot, "that I could not say exactly what she owed me, but that I was quite certain the amount was below 1200 livres.<sup>1</sup> 'Nevertheless take it,' replied she ; 'and if there is anything over, give it to your mother for her poor pensioners.'" Beugnot, on making up the account, found he had been paid twenty louis too many, which in accordance with the countess's instructions he handed over to his mother. So favourable and lasting an impression did this act of generosity make on Madame Beugnot, that she could never afterwards be brought to believe in the truth of any of the crimes charged against this unhappy woman.

<sup>1</sup> There were twenty-four livres or francs in the louis of those days.

## XVI.

DEC. 1784—JAN. 1785.

THE DIAMOND NECKLACE IS SOLD AT LAST.

THE countess and her husband, the steward and the four tall footmen, the led horses and the baggage waggon, the outriders and the elegant *berline*, returned to Paris at the close of November, 1784, when the De la Mottes proceeded, after all their desperate struggles towards this end, to enter at last into the coveted gaities of the rank and fashion of the most brilliant capital in Europe. At the outset they did not share their good fortune with their sister, who was still passing a dull time of it at the Abbey of Jarcy. All they seem to have done was to resign to her the right of petitioning in the name of Valois, for on the 30th of November in this same year we find her making one of those stereotyped appeals for assistance, for which the family had now become notorious, to the Abbé Bourbon, natural son of Louis XV.<sup>1</sup> Irritated no doubt at her having refused to part with her pension, husband and wife determined to leave her to herself to enjoy in retirement its extremely slender benefits.

Suddenly grown rich in the queen's name, after having successfully established a very general belief in her pretended intimacy with royalty, the countess's instinctive tact led her to perceive that a new style of living was indispensable on her part to maintain the delusion, and keep alive that credit which she intended employing as the basis of still larger operations. The very extravagance to which she was naturally inclined became consequently one of the chief elements in her system of deceit. It was no longer "alms" that she contemplated asking from a carriage, since she had made the discovery that credulity was a mine which, properly worked, would furnish a far richer yield than charity was ever likely to do.

<sup>1</sup> This letter of Mademoiselle de Saint-Remi's has obtained the honour of being preserved among the historical autographs in the National Archives.



Beugnot tells us that on his return to Paris he was confirmed in his opinion that the opulence of Madame de la Motte was due to her intimate connection with the Cardinal de Rohan, and that he regulated his conduct towards her accordingly. "I presented myself," remarks he, "at her door with discretion: I went to dine at her house only when she did me the honour of inviting me; and I took care to put her at her ease by affecting respect towards her. On her part she made me acquainted with her various projects, setting them out before me with that negligence which presupposes the certainty of success. She intended, for instance, to withdraw her brother from the navy—an ungrateful and stupid service in times of peace; a regiment had been promised her for him. As for her husband, she had purchased him a step which would at once give him captain's rank, and she would by-and-by see if she could not get him named second colonel. With regard to her sister, she would not hear of her doing as she herself had done—in other words, contracting some stupid marriage. If agreeable to her, she should be canoness at Douxières or Poulangy, as all the places at Remiremont were bespoke for ten years to come. 'If,' remarked she, 'I had espoused a man of name, and one who frequented the court, that would have been of some use to me. I should then have got on much quicker; as it is, my husband is to me rather an obstacle than a means. It is necessary that I should do something to make my name rank before his, which is, you know, contrary to all decorum.'

"When I visited Madame de la Motte, she never failed to introduce me to the company as a young magistrate, and always placed me immediately after the titled people. The tone of the house was, at least in those days, that of good company. I met there the Marquis de Saisseval, then a great gambler, rich, and currying favour with the court; the Abbé de Cabres, councillor in the Paris Parliament; Rouillé d'Orfeuil, intendant of the Champagne; the Count d'Estaing, one of the heroes of the American war, and subsequently in command of the National Guards of Versailles, when the château was stormed by the mob; the Baron de Villeroy, an officer of the king's body-guard; the receiver-general Dorey; and Lecoulteux de la Noraye, who, while aspiring to the post of director of the countess's affairs and finances, dreamed of being one

day appointed *contrôleur-général* of the finances of the nation, and who considered himself altogether 'a most important personage, though he had only just wit enough to be nothing worse than a fool.'” La Noraye was no favourite with Beugnot, who in after years knocked him down on a particular occasion for playing him some shabby trick when they were fellow-prisoners in La Force during the days of the Terror.<sup>1</sup>

All the while that madame and her husband were showing off at Bar-sur-Aube, the cardinal was moping at Saverne, fretfully pacing up and down a favourite walk in the episcopal pleasure-grounds, which he had named the “Promenade de la Rose,” in honour of the gracious gift of counterfeit royalty at the midnight interview in the park of Versailles. This walk, which led from the palace to the neighbouring woods, had gone by the name of the “Route de Bonheur” (road of happiness), until the cardinal, to whom happiness still seemed hovering in the future, gave it its new designation.<sup>2</sup> He had been banished to Saverne in remote Alsace by one of those billets bordered with *vignettes bleues*, penned by the forger Vilette, so that he might be out of the way while the De la Mottes were enjoying themselves in their country retreat.

On the countess's return to Paris, the correspondence between the cardinal and the phantom queen is speedily resumed. The letters that are now interchanged are more familiar and are even tender. The amatory prelate, we may be certain, complained that the last meeting was too brief, implored permission to return to the capital, and begged for another interview. Replies were doubtless sent, exhorting him to be discreet, and promising to comply with his request at some future period. One thing, however, is quite certain: it was at this time that madame applied for and obtained in the queen's name from the cardinal the 100,000 livres, of which we have already spoken, for of the 50,000 livres received in August last every sou of course was spent.

All this while plans are being perfected for the successful carrying out of that grand scheme of fraud, which not only caused the greatest commotion throughout France, but may be said to have

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoires du Comte Beugnot,” vol. i. pp. 45, *et seq.*, 259, 260, 262.

<sup>2</sup> “Compte rendu de ce qui s'est passé au Parlement,” etc., p. 92.

startled the entire civilized world by its audacity. The first incidents of the new intrigue appear to have been congenial. Some hanger-on of the countess's would seem to have sought out an emissary of the crown jewellers, employed to find a purchaser for the famed Diamond Necklace with the prospect of a commission for himself, and whispered in his ear that the Countess de la Motte was privately received by the queen, with whom she had both credit and influence, but that unusual reasons existed for not speaking publicly of this intimacy. He thought, however, that the countess, if she could only be induced to undertake the negotiation, was a very likely person to prevail upon the queen to buy the Necklace. This suggestion was duly reported to Böhmer and Bassenge, after which it appears the former waited on Madame de la Motte at her own house and exhibited the matchless jewel. Everything else followed in due course.

Though evidently interwoven with those strange fabrications in which the countess delighted to indulge, her own relation of this first stage in the great fraud has a certain air of probability about it, and furnishes us with the ends of some of the threads in this entangled web. After citing the name of a speculator and schemer named Laporte, who was always hatching new projects for making money, and whom she had been the means of introducing to the cardinal with the view of drawing him into some of Laporte's grand undertakings, she observes: "This Laporte was a very active person, and constantly at my house; I had stood godmother to one of his children. Achette, his father-in-law, was an intimate friend of Böhmer's. One day, when the two latter were at Versailles, Achette said to Böhmer, 'Are you still saddled with your Necklace?' 'Unfortunately I am,' answered Böhmer; 'it is a heavy burden to me—I would gladly give a thousand louis to any one who could find me a purchaser for it.' It is most probable that from the date of this conversation my name was mentioned, Achette explaining to Böhmer how his son-in-law, Laporte, had access to me, and through me to the cardinal.

"One day Laporte having dined at my house, mentioned to me, for the first time, the fatal Necklace, observing that he rested all his hopes on me; that if I would only say a word to the queen, he was convinced her majesty would make the purchase, and that the



jewellers were ready to enter into any arrangements that might be agreeable to her."

On this occasion, as well as on a subsequent one, the countess informs us that she declined to interfere, and though urgently pressed, would not listen to the suggestion. A third attempt to induce her to undertake the negotiation was afterwards made, she tells us, when Böhmer came to her house with Achette, bringing the Necklace along with him.

" 'Is it not a pity,' said Achette to me, 'that so magnificent a jewel should leave the kingdom whilst we have a queen whom it would so well become, and whom, I am sure, must at heart long to possess it?'

" 'I don't know that,' answered I; 'nor can I understand why you have applied to me to transmit your proposals to her majesty. I protest to you I have no opportunity of submitting them to her, not having the honour of approaching her.'

" 'Madame,' replied Achette, with a look full of meaning, 'we are not come hither to pry into your secrets, still less to evince any doubt respecting what you do us the honour to tell us; but believe me I am well acquainted with Versailles; I know what is going on there; and when I took the liberty of introducing my friend to you, it was because I felt convinced that if you would honour him with your support, nobody at court is better able to render him the service we make bold to solicit.'

" Böhmer's mouth was open: I saw he was going to speak to me of his gratitude; so, to get rid of them both, I told them I would see if, by means of my connections, I could contrive indirectly to render them some service."<sup>1</sup>

These visits took place at the end of December. In January, 1785, the countess contrives to insinuate to the crown jewellers, through some of her high-class connections, that the queen really does desire to have the Necklace. She openly states as much to the cardinal, whom, in the very depth of a bitterly-cold winter, she has summoned to Paris by the aid of a courier armed with one of those well-known and highly-prized billets, gilt-edged, or bordered with *vignettes bleues*, in which the queen is made to say: "The

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte," p. 75, *et seq.*



wished-for moment has not yet arrived, but I desire to hasten your return on account of a secret negotiation which interests me personally, and which I am unwilling to confide to any one but yourself. The Countess de la Motte will explain the meaning of this enigma."

After reading this letter the cardinal longed for wings ; still he was obliged to content himself with such fleet coursers as the *maîtres de poste* along the line of road to the capital could provide him with. So, well wrapped up in furs, and snugly ensconced in the corner of a comfortable close travelling carriage, he is soon rolling rapidly over the two hundred and eighty miles of frost-bound road that intervene between the episcopal palace of Saverne and the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles ; and, no sooner has he learned the solution of the enigma, and procured from the countess the address of the crown jewellers—at the sign of the "Grand Balcony," Rue Vendôme—than, puffed up with the importance of the commission intrusted to him, he hies to Böhmer and Bassenge to open negotiations with them for the purchase of the costly gem. The cardinal had not far to go, for the Rue Vendôme (now the Rue Béranger) was only some ten minutes' walk from his hôtel, being situated but a single street from the junction of the Rue Vieille-du-Temple with the Rue St. Louis (now the Rue Turenne). At the present day many of the houses have been rebuilt, and of those which were in existence at the time of our narrative<sup>1</sup> only a couple in any way answer to the sign "*Au Grand Balcon*," adopted by the crown jewellers. These are Nos. 11 and 22 ; the former—for the time being the Mairie of the 3rd Arrondissement—is a handsome building with an ornamental ironwork balcony in front, and having before it an open court, which one has no difficulty in picturing filled with the grand equipages and liveried lacqueys of the customers of our friends Böhmer and Bassenge.

In the excitement of conversation the grand almoner indiscreetly blurted out what he believed to be the fact, although he had been strictly enjoined to keep it secret, namely, that the queen was the actual purchaser of the jewel, but her name was on no account to

<sup>1</sup> This and similar allusions to localities connected with our narrative refer to the year 1866.

transpire in the business. The price eventually agreed upon for the Necklace was 1,600,000 livres (£64,000), to be paid in four instalments of equal amount at intervals of six months: the first instalment of 400,000 livres to fall due in August. But the crown jewellers, who had been advised to be cautious in dealing with the cardinal, required that the contract should be authorized by the royal signature. To account for this demand, they explained to the cardinal that they had heavy debts and liabilities which prevented them from parting with an asset of so much value without replacing it with adequate vouchers to satisfy their creditors—notably M. Baudard de Saint-James, treasurer-general of the navy, to whom they were indebted in no less a sum than 800,000 livres,<sup>1</sup> and who had waited so long and so patiently.

Strange to say, the person who had cautioned the jewellers to act so guardedly was the great *intrigante* herself. Accompanied by her husband she had called upon Böhmer and Bassenge at seven o'clock on a raw January morning, a couple of hours or so before the cardinal, to announce his coming, when, after having reminded them that she had been no party to the transaction, she proceeded to recommend them not to come to terms without binding down the cardinal in such a manner as to make themselves secure.<sup>2</sup> That she took this step, so likely to frustrate her own object, was afterwards proved at the trial. Most persons would have thought that the probability of such a proceeding being fatal to her plans would have prevented her, if she meditated a fraud, acting in the way she did; but does not the reader perceive that this most subtle of impostors had thereby secured, by anticipation, a strong plea in her favour to disprove her guilt?

The obtaining the queen's signature to the contract necessarily gave rise to some delay. The cardinal sent the deed as he believed to Marie-Antoinette through Madame de la Motte, with the intimation that it was only a form, and would be merely shown to the jewellers, and not delivered up to them. The countess, however, returns with the deed unsigned. Royalty is in dudgeon at its sacred name having been made use of. The grand

<sup>1</sup> "Premier Interrogatoire du Cardinal de Rohan."

<sup>2</sup> Déposition de Bassenge.

almoner was greatly distressed at this new obstacle, which he thought her majesty was inclined to aggravate; but what was to be done?

Madame de la Motte returns a second time from Versailles, and pretends to have had a second audience with Marie-Antoinette. The queen, she says, was very angry with the cardinal for having introduced her name into the transaction, but had insinuated:

"If inspiring confidence is all that is requisite, could not the cardinal have devised some other mode? The cardinal is perhaps not aware of it, but I may tell you that I have bound myself by a formal engagement with the king not to sign any deed without his knowledge. So the thing you see is impossible. Contrive between you what you can do, or else renounce the purchase altogether. . . . It seems to me that, as this document is only a formality, and as these people do not know my handwriting . . . But you will reflect upon it; still, once for all, I cannot sign it. At all events, tell the cardinal that the first time I shall see him I will communicate to him the arrangements I intend to make with him."<sup>1</sup>

The countess then explains that, returning home after this interview, and not reflecting on the serious consequences of using the queen's name in the manner suggested, she resolves to counterfeit the royal signature, and for that purpose applies to Rétaux de Villette, the forger of the letters which to the last the countess always maintained to be genuine.

"I explained to M. de Villette," she says, "the new aspect which this affair had assumed, the cardinal's perplexity, the queen's dissatisfaction, the interview I had had with her majesty, and the meaning I attached to her expression that the jewellers were unacquainted with her handwriting.

"Villette said, if I was certain that the queen had made use of the express words I had just repeated, it would appear to him, as it had appeared to me, that she wished me to understand it did not much signify whose hand inscribed the attestation, since the jewellers did not know her handwriting. 'But,' added he, 'neither the queen nor yourself suspect the risk a person runs by counterfeiting writings. That is an act which the law has in-

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. pp. 340, 341.



cluded in the list of crimes under the name of forgery. We can however do this. Taking for granted the statement of the queen, that these people do not know her handwriting, it may be fairly supposed that they are equally ignorant of her form of signature. To sign *Marie-Antoinette* alone, according to your idea, would be a positive forgery; but the metamorphosis of an Austrian princess into a French one—to say, for instance, *Marie-Antoinette de France*—would really be unmeaning. If our object was to obtain this Necklace by a swindle, when the imposture came to be exposed such a signature would serve as a proof of it; but as we have no reasonable doubt but that the jewellers will be paid, since they will have the cardinal's guarantee privately supported by that of the queen, I think we may, without much fear of committing ourselves, submit to the necessity; I will therefore do what I now explain to you.

“First, I shall not disguise my own writing; and, secondly, I will give the queen the incorrect title of *Marie-Antoinette de France*. The contract being exhibited by the cardinal to Böhmer and Bassenge, they will not examine it too minutely, I'll be bound; and you must promise me to burn it in my presence when the jewellers have been paid and the matter is at end.’

“I gave him my word of honour that I would do this, and he signed the deed according to our covenant. I left him directly afterwards and drove at once to the cardinal. At first I intended to give him the contract approved and signed, without telling him how I had settled matters; but I reflected that Villette and I were not the safest judges; that the affair might be more serious than we imagined, and that if such were the case the cardinal might be placed in an embarrassing position. So I resolved to tell him all.”

Thereupon, according to Madame de la Motte's version, the cardinal was informed of the forgery, and of the *incorrectness* of the signature, after he had seen the contract without detecting either. He acquiesced, we are told by the countess, in the fraud, merely observing that “since he had been deceived by it, it would be the same with the jewellers.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte,” p. 93, *et seq.*, and “Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself,” vol. i. p. 344 *et seq.*



Such is the specious explanation given by Madame de la Motte of the forgery of the queen's signature to the contract. But amidst this farrago of falsehood—for there can be no doubt the queen's signature was appended in the absurd form described, owing to the ignorance of this pair of sharpers<sup>1</sup> the simple truth remains that the deluded cardinal, hoping thereby to please the queen, had bought the Necklace of the jewellers on his own guarantee for one million six hundred thousand francs, backed with this fraudulent signature of Marie-Antoinette's. The contract had been drawn up with great care by the cardinal himself, and was written with his own hand, since the matter was of course of too secret a nature to be intrusted to a professional engrosser; and, after having been exhibited to Böhmer and Bassenge for their private satisfaction, it was left in the cardinal's keeping. The unfortunate dupe of course believed he still held possession of the royal guarantee, the grotesque inventions to the contrary of Madame de la Motte, which we have just laid before the reader, being of no further moment than to expose her own duplicity. The confidence and mental satisfaction of the jewellers when they read the contract, ratified by majesty itself, was equal to that felt by the cardinal. "They read it," says the Rohan memorial, "and appeared full of joy; they then returned it, but the cardinal requested them to take a copy of it, which they had not thought of doing. This copy they made themselves without the slightest doubt being raised in their minds by the strangeness of the signature."

We may instance as another proof of the countess's prompt mode of action, that by the end of January, 1785, the whole affair was settled—in fact within six weeks after she had promised "to see if she could not contrive indirectly to render the jewellers some service;" the famous Diamond Necklace which had been to them a source of grave anxiety for years was off their hands.

<sup>1</sup> Madame Campan states that "*Vu bon.—Marie-Antoinette*" was the form in which the queen certified the accuracy of an account.

## XVII.

1781-1785.

## CHARLATAN COUNT CAGLIOSTRO.

WHEN, in the autumn of the year 1781, the De la Mottes were chasing the Marchioness de Boulainvilliers, who they had heard was at Strasbourg, the notorious Cagliostro was astonishing the good people of that famous town as much by his singular conduct as by the extraordinary cures he was represented to have performed. "Curious to behold so remarkable a personage, the cardinal," who was then at his episcopal palace of Saverne, "went over to Strasbourg, but found it necessary to use interest to get admitted into the presence of the illustrious charlatan. 'If monseigneur the cardinal is sick,' said he, 'let him come to me and I will cure him. If he is well, he has no business with me nor I with him.' This reply, far from offending the cardinal's vanity, only increased the desire he had to become acquainted with this new Esculapius. Having at length gained admission to his sanctuary, the cardinal fancied he saw impressed on the countenance of this mysterious and taciturn individual, a dignity so imposing that he felt himself penetrated with an almost religious awe, and the very first words he uttered were inspired by reverence. The interview, which was but brief, excited more strongly than ever in the mind of the cardinal the desire of a more intimate acquaintance. This gradually came about, the crafty empiric timing his conduct and his advances so skilfully, that without seeming to desire it he gained the grand almoner's entire confidence, and obtained the greatest ascendancy over him."<sup>1</sup>

During the next two years or so, Cagliostro seems to have made the episcopal palace at Saverne his home whenever he felt so inclined. When the cardinal happened to be there, the count amused him by performing experiments in the laboratory which

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires pour servir," etc., par l'Abbé Georgel, vol. ii. p. 47, *et seq*

had been fitted up in a private part of the palace for his especial use—making, so the cardinal maintained, not only gold, but diamonds, under his very eyes.<sup>1</sup> But when the cardinal was away the crucibles were no longer in request, and the count would indulge in carousals, prolonged far into the night, with the Baron de Planta, the cardinal's equerry and confidant, and a black sheep of the choicest breed, carousals at which his eminence's matchless Tokay flowed like water.<sup>2</sup>

In the memorial published in his behalf at the time of the Necklace trial, Cagliostro gives a most romantic account of himself. He is ignorant, he says, of the place of his birth, but was brought up while a child in the city of Medina, where he went by the name of Acharat, and lived attended by servants in a style of great splendour in apartments in the palace of the Mufti Salahayn, the chief of the Mussulmans. From Medina, he pretends, he was taken when quite a youth to Mecca, where he remained for three years petted by the scherif. He is next taken to Egypt, visits the chief cities of Africa and Asia, and eventually sails from Rhodes for Malta, where apartments are provided for him in the palace of the grand master. Here, he says, he assumed the name of Cagliostro and the title of count. From Malta he proceeds to Sicily and Naples, thence to Rome, where he makes the acquaintance of several cardinals, and is admitted to frequent audiences of the Pope. He professes to have next visited Spain, Portugal, Holland, Russia, and Poland, and gives a list of the nobles of these countries with whom he had become acquainted. At length, in September, 1780, he goes to Strasbourg, where his fame as a physician had already preceded him. Here, he asserts, with perfect truth, he cured the poor generally, and particularly sick soldiers and prisoners, without fee or reward. Strasbourg was soon crowded with strangers, who came either to see him or to consult him. It is now that he makes the acquaintance of the Cardinal de Rohan, whom he accompanies to Paris to prescribe for the Prince de Soubise, suffering at the time from an accident to his leg. After a short sojourn in the capital he returns to Strasbourg, when being persecuted by a party in the town, it is quite certain that letters

<sup>1</sup> See *post*, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> “*Mémoires pour servir*,” etc., par l'Abbé Georgel, vol. ii. p. 50.



are written to the authorities in his behalf by the Count de Vergennes, minister for foreign affairs, the Marquis de Miroménil, keeper of the seals, and the Marquis de Ségur, minister of war, who desire that every protection shall be afforded him.

Cagliostro's story about his residence in Medina and Mecca, and Egypt, Rhodes and Malta, was a tissue of impudent lies. The truth is, his real name was Joseph Balsamo, and he was the son of a small tradesman of Palermo, in which city he was born in 1743. The family were of Jewish origin, and he derived the name of Cagliostro from a great uncle. In his early youth he belonged to the religious order of Charitable Brethren, and as he grew older became remarkable for his intelligence, cleverness, and cunning. Later on, he appears to have studied medicine with advantage.

Growing tired of the obscurity of his lot, he forged the title-deed to some considerable estate, and on the fraud being discovered precipitately embarked for Catalonia where he married a young and pretty girl. With her he proceeded to Rome, and having conferred on himself the title of Prince Pellegrini, with that audacity which never deserted him, he returned to Palermo under this assumed appellation. There a genuine prince became infatuated with Donna Lorenza and took her husband under his powerful protection. The false Pellegrini, however, was soon recognised as the escaped forger and arrested. But on the day appointed for his examination, his friend the prince forced the doors of the tribunal, assaulted the counsel for the prosecution, and overwhelmed the president with reproaches. The consequence was that the terrified court set the prisoner at liberty, and Cagliostro, leaving his wife in the care of the prince, again started on his travels,<sup>1</sup> in the course of which he visited many of the chief cities of the Continent. He was picked up, it is commonly asserted, while still a young man—being little over thirty years of age—by the sect of Illuminati, who thought, and correctly thought, that they had discovered in him a willing and able instrument for the dissemination of their doctrines. His initiation into the mysteries of Illuminism took place in a cave some little distance from Frankfort-on-the-Main, when he learnt for the first time that the object of the society of

<sup>1</sup> "Cagliostro's Stammbaum" von Wolfgang von Goethe.



which he was now a member, was to overturn the thrones of Europe, and that the first blow was to be struck in France ; that after the fall of the French monarchy it was proposed to attack Rome ; that the society had extensive resources, and was in the possession of enormous funds, dispersed among the banks of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Basle, Lyons, London, Venice, and Genoa, the proceeds of the annual subscriptions of its members. A considerable sum of money, which he afterwards pretended he had acquired by the practice of alchemy, was at once placed at his disposal, to enable him to propagate the doctrines of the sect in France. This was the origin of his first visit to Strasbourg in the autumn of the year 1780, when he adopted for his device the letters L. P. D. signifying *Lilia pedibus destrue*—Trample the lilies under foot.<sup>1</sup>

Cagliostro was one of those individuals who, for reasons of their own, envelop themselves in a maze of mystery, and are rarely seen through during their lives, because they address themselves to men's imaginations alone. By exciting wonder they disarm reason. He laid claim to many gifts and acquirements ; had studied medicine, was an adept at alchemy, and knew something of natural magic. The acts which he performed were so contrived by his arts and wiles, that all his visitors (and they comprised persons of the highest rank and the utmost intellectual attainments) considered them to be marvellous, whilst the gaping multitude magnified every feat until it went far beyond this ideal. He set no price on his public exhibitions, and darted looks of wounded honour at those who, he pretended, degraded him by offering him gold ; whilst his hand was constantly open to the indigent, whom he waited on in their humble homes with advice, medicine, and money. His widespread acts of benevolence, and the luxurious style in which he lived, proved him to be rich, and yet none were able to discover the sources of his wealth. The houses of the most opulent citizens were thrown open to him, and without seeking the great, but seeming rather to avoid them, he constantly found himself in their company. Among this class he had many proselytes, but none who believed in him so implicitly as the Cardinal Prince de Rohan, who, spite of the count's "perfect quack face," seems to

<sup>1</sup> "Louis XVI.," par Alexandre Dumas, vol. iii. p. 154.

have worshipped him as a being something more than human. Indeed in one of the *salons* of the Palais-Cardinal there was a marble bust of Cagliostro, with a Latin inscription on the pedestal signifying "God of the Earth."<sup>1</sup>

A friend of the grand almoner's, the Baroness d'Oberkirche, who met Cagliostro at Saverne at this epoch, sketches his portrait for us in her "Memoirs," and furnishes us with convincing proofs of the singular influence which the count had succeeded in acquiring over his credulous patron. "Cagliostro was anything but handsome," she observes, "still I have never seen a more remarkable physiognomy ; above all, he had a penetrating look which seemed almost supernatural. I know not how to describe the expression of his eyes : it was at once fire and ice ; attracted and repelled you at the same time ; made you afraid and inspired you with an irrepressible curiosity. One might draw two different portraits of him, both resembling him, and yet totally dissimilar. He wore on his shirt-front, on his watch-chain, and on his fingers, diamonds of large size, and apparently of the purest water. If they were not paste, they were worth a king's ransom. He pretended that he had made them himself. All this frippery showed the charlatan miles off.

"When Cagliostro perceived me he saluted me very respectfully. I returned his salutation without affecting either hauteur or condescension. There were fifteen of us at dinner ; nevertheless, the cardinal occupied himself almost exclusively with me, using a sort of refined coquetry to bring me over to his way of thinking with regard to Cagliostro, with whom he was perfectly infatuated. I was placed on the cardinal's right hand, and during dinner he tried by every means to enforce his convictions upon me. I resisted, politely but firmly ; he grew impatient, and on leaving table volunteered me his confidence. Had I not heard him with my own ears I could never have believed that a prince of the Roman church, a Rohan, an intelligent and honourable man in so many respects, could have allowed himself to be brought to the point of abjuring both his dignity and free will at the bidding of a *chevalier d'industrie*.

<sup>1</sup> "Premier Interrogatoire de Madame de la Motte."

“‘In truth, baroness, you are very hard to convince,’ remarked the cardinal; ‘what! has not all that he has told you, all that I have just related, satisfied you? I must then avow everything. Understand, at least, that I am about to confide to you a secret of importance.’ I was greatly embarrassed. I did not wish to be the depositary of any of the cardinal’s secrets, and was about to excuse myself when, divining my intention, the prince exclaimed: ‘Do not say no! but listen to me. You see this?’

“‘The cardinal showed me a large solitaire which he had on his little finger, engraved with the arms of the house of Rohan; it was a ring worth 20,000 francs at least. ‘It is a fine stone, my lord,’ observed I; ‘I have been already admiring it.’ ‘Well, it was he who made it; created it out of nothing. I saw him myself. I was present, with eyes fixed upon the crucible, and assisted at the operation. Is this science? What do you think of it, baroness? They tell me that he is only luring me on, that he cheats me; the jeweller and engraver have valued this brilliant at 25,000 francs. You will at least admit that he is a strange sort of sharper to make such presents as this.’

“‘I acknowledge I was stupefied. The Prince de Rohan perceived it, and continued, certain of his victory: ‘But this is not all: he makes gold; he has made in my presence, in the crucibles of the palace, five or six thousand francs’ worth. I shall have more of it—I shall, in fact, have any quantity—he will make me the richest prince in Europe. These are not dreams, madam, these are certainties. Think, too, of his prophecies fulfilled; of the miraculous cures he has performed. I tell you that he is not only a most extraordinary, but a sublime man, and one whose goodness has never been equalled; the charities he bestows, the benefits he confers, pass all imagination.’

“‘Am I to understand your eminence,’ inquired I, ‘that you have given him nothing for all this—have not made him the smallest advance, have made him no promise, given him no written document which compromises you? Pardon my curiosity, but since you wish to make me a confidant of these mysteries, I——’ ‘You are right, madam,’ replied the prince, ‘but I can assure you that he has asked nothing, has received nothing from me.’ ‘Ah! my lord,’ I exclaimed, ‘it must be that this man reckons on obtain-



ing from you many dangerous sacrifices since he buys your unbounded confidence so dearly. Were I in your place I should be extremely cautious ; one of these days he will lead you too far.' The cardinal only answered by an incredulous smile ; but I am certain that later, at the time of the Necklace affair, when Cagliostro and the Countess de la Motte had cast him to the bottom of the abyss, he recalled my words."<sup>1</sup>

Singularly enough, Cagliostro arrived in Paris just at the time the cardinal was making the final arrangements with the crown jewellers for the purchase of the Necklace. Whether or no he was summoned thither by the cardinal himself we are unable to say, but if the Abbé Georgel's statement is to be relied on, it is quite certain that the grand almoner consulted Cagliostro respecting the business of the Necklace prior to concluding the negotiations. The abbé says : "This Python mounted his tripod ; the Egyptian invocations were made at night in the cardinal's own saloon, which was illuminated by an immense number of wax tapers. The oracle, under the inspiration of its familiar demon, pronounced that the negotiation was worthy of the prince, that it would be crowned with success, that it would raise the goodness of the queen to its height, and bring to light that happy day which would unfold the rare talents of the cardinal for the benefit of France and of the human race."<sup>2</sup>

The Countess de la Motte, who it will be remembered had formerly met Cagliostro at Strasbourg, renewed her acquaintance with him in the *salons* of the Palais-Cardinal, where she was now a constant visitor. For a time it was an affair of diamond cut diamond between them. She flattered the arch impostor with the finest art, appeared to be his dupe, and broke out into loud exclamations of surprise when he performed his tricks and practised his delusions in her presence. The crafty cheat was himself cheated. By degrees he became persuaded that she was really a confidant of the French queen, that she had credit at court, and would soon have power. Fully convinced of her influence, and perceiving, as he thought, that his patron the cardinal would by her assistance

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires de la Baronne d'Oberkirche," vol. i. pp. 129, 144.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires pour servir," etc., par l'Abbé Georgel, vol. ii. p. 59.



retrieve his political fortune, he encouraged that sanguine prelate, and worked, as we have seen, upon his imagination, with a view to dispel any lingering doubt he might chance to entertain. So infatuated did Cagliostro become under the influence of his own delusions on the one side, and the spell of this enchantress on the other, that the countess would appear to have controlled the crafty necromancer even in the performance of his own spells.<sup>1</sup>

Cagliostro, after he was regularly settled in Paris, became a frequent visitor at the countess's house—he and madame, we are told, were like two fingers on one hand—where he was received with an amount of respect verging on to reverence. The De la Mottes and he were close neighbours, for he lived at the Hôtel de Chavigny, in the Rue Saint-Claude, only a couple of streets off. “The house which he occupied, and which was afterwards the residence of Barras, was one of the most elegant of the quarter.”<sup>2</sup> In the *salon*, decorated with oriental luxury, and bathed in a kind of semi-daylight when it was not resplendent with the blaze of a hundred lights, the pursuits of the philosopher and conspirator might be divined by the side of the projects of the quack. There one saw the bust of Hippocrates, and, in a black frame, inscribed in letters of gold, a literal translation of Pope's Universal Prayer.”<sup>3</sup> Here Cagliostro lived in state, giving balls, assemblies, and audiences at which he insolently offered his hand to his fair disciples to kiss, while he treated his male visitors, and at times even the cardinal himself, with marked disdain.<sup>4</sup>

Young Beugnot, who met Cagliostro at one of Madame de la Motte's *petits soupers*, tells us that the countess previously warned him that she would be obliged to disarm the inquietude of Cagliostro, who, for no reason whatever, invariably refused to sup if he thought that any one had been invited to meet him. Moreover, she begged Beugnot to ask him no questions, not to interrupt him when he was speaking, and to answer with readiness any inquiries he had addressed to him. “I subscribed,” says Beugnot, “to these conditions, and would have accepted even harder ones to

<sup>1</sup> See *post*, p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> It is the corner house looking on to the Boulevard Beaumarchais.

<sup>3</sup> “Histoire de la Révolution Française,” par Louis Blanc, vol. ii. p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> “Réponse pour la Comtesse de la Motte,” p. 27.

gratify my curiosity. At half-past ten the folding doors were thrown open, and the Count de Cagliostro was announced. Madame de la Motte precipitately quitted her arm-chair, rushed up to him and drew him into a corner of the *salon*, where I presume she begged him to pardon my presence. Cagliostro advanced towards me and bowed, without appearing at all embarrassed at perceiving a stranger. He was of medium height, rather stout, had a very short neck, and a round face ornamented with two large eyes sunken in his head, and a broad turn-up nose ; his complexion was of an olive tinge ; his *coiffure* was new in France, his hair being divided into several little tresses, which, uniting at the back of the head, were tied up in the form known as the 'club.' He wore a French cut coat of iron grey embroidered with gold lace, and carried his sword stuck in the skirts, a scarlet vest trimmed with *point d'Espagne*, red breeches, and a hat edged with a white feather. This last article of dress was still necessary to mountebanks, dentists, and other medical *artistes* who made speeches and sold their drugs out of doors. Cagliostro's costume was relieved by lace ruffles, several costly rings, and shoe-buckles of an old pattern but brilliant enough to pass for very fine diamonds.

"There were at supper only the members of the family, among whom I include Father Loth, *minime* of the Place Royale, who reconciled, I know not how, his sacred functions with the place of second secretary to Madame de la Motte. He used to say mass for her on Sundays, and charged himself during the rest of the week with commissions at the Palais-Cardinal which the first secretary thought beneath his dignity. Neither must I count as a stranger the Chevalier de Montbreul, a veteran of the green rooms, and still a good conversationalist, who was prepared to affirm almost any mortal thing, and was found, as if by chance, wherever Cagliostro appeared, ready to bear witness to the marvels he had performed, and to offer himself as a positive example miraculously cured of I know not how many diseases, of which the names alone were sufficiently startling.

"There were then nine or ten of us at table ; Madame de la Motte had on one side of her Cagliostro and Montbreul, and I was on her other side, facing the former, whom I made a point of examining by stealth, and still did not know what to think of him ;

the face, the style of dressing the hair, the whole of the man, impressed me in spite of myself. I waited for him to open his mouth. He spoke I know not what jargon, half Italian, half French, plentifully interlarded with quotations in an unknown tongue, which passed with the unlearned for Arabic. He had all the talking to himself, and found time to go over at least twenty different subjects in the course of the evening, simply because he gave to them merely that extent of development which seemed good to him. Every moment he was inquiring if he was understood, whereupon everybody bowed in turn to assure him that he was. When starting a subject he seemed like one transported, raised his voice to the highest pitch and indulged in the most extravagant gesticulations. The subjects of his discourse were the heavens, the stars, the grand *arcantum*, Memphis, transcendental chemistry, giants, and the extinct monsters of the animal kingdom. He spoke, moreover, of a city in the interior of Africa ten times as large as Paris, and where he pretended he had correspondents." Beugnot further mentions, that in between his rhapsodies he would chatter the most frivolous nonsense to the Countess de la Motte, whom he designated his dove, his gazelle, and his white swan. After supper he addressed numerous questions to Beugnot, one following another with extraordinary rapidity. To all the count's catechising the young advocate invariably replied by a respectful avowal of his ignorance, and subsequently was surprised to learn from Madame de la Motte that Cagliostro had conceived a most favourable opinion, not merely of his deportment, but likewise of his knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. p. 59, *et seq.*

Cagliostro laid claim to being possessed of the power not only of transmuting metals and curing all diseases, but of calling up spirits from the other world. His evocations were certainly not without an element of art. On one occasion the spirit the company desired to commune with was that of D'Alembert, and from notes furnished by an eye-witness, Lady Mantz, the actor Fleury gives the following account of the ceremony in his *Mémoires* :—

"The spectators or, as Cagliostro preferred to call them, guests sat in arm-chairs along the wall on the east side of the apartment. Before these chairs was drawn an iron chain," lest some foolish person should be impelled by curiosity to rush upon destruction. "On the other side was placed the



chair intended for the reception of the apparition. The Grand Koptha—the name assumed by Cagliostro on such occasions—chose the unusual hour of 3 a.m. for his evocations. Shortly before that time a voice was heard to order the removal from the scene of cats, dogs, horses, birds, and all reptiles, should any be near. Then came a command that none but free men should remain in the apartment; the servants were accordingly dismissed. A deep silence followed, and the lights were suddenly extinguished. The same voice, now assuming a louder and more authoritative tone, requested the guests to shake the iron chain; they obeyed, and an indescribable thrill ran through their frames. The clock at length struck three—slowly, and with a prolonged vibration of the bell. At each stroke a flash, as sudden and transitory as lightning, illumined the apartment, and the words ‘Philosophy,’ ‘Nature,’ and ‘Truth’ successively appeared in legible characters above the empty arm chair. The last word was more brilliant than the others. The lustres were suddenly relighted, how no one could tell. Stifled cries were heard as from a man whose mouth was gagged—a noise like that of a man struggling to break loose from persons detaining him;—and Cagliostro appeared.

“The Grand Koptha wore a costume to which it would be difficult to find anything analogous. Flowing drapery set off his figure to advantage, and the glow of enthusiasm in his face made him look really handsome. He delivered a short but comprehensive address, commenting on the words just seen over the chair. Then, turning successively to the four cardinal points, he uttered some cabalistic words, which returned as if from a distant echo. The lights having been extinguished, he commanded the guests again to shake the chain, and as they did so the strange feeling previously alluded to was renewed. The outline of the arm-chair now became gradually perceptible in the darkness, as though the lines had been traced on a black ground with phosphorus. The next moment, and as if by the same process, a winding sheet could be seen, with two fleshless hands resting upon the arm of the chair. The winding sheet, slowly opening, discovered an emaciated form; a short breathing was heard, and two brilliant piercing eyes were fixed upon the spectators.”

The illustrious philosopher, the author of the Preface to the “*Encyclopédie*,” had been called from the dead. He would answer questions put to him, but Cagliostro alone was privileged to hear him speak. “And what questions were put to him?” asked Fleury of Lady Mantz. “He was asked whether he had seen the other world.” “And what did he say?” “Ah, Monsieur Fleury, it was a terrible reply, especially to one who, like me, looks forward to a better future. He said, ‘There is no other world.’” “And did no one reply?” “Reply! who could venture to reply to the ghost of M. d’Alembert, returned from—ah, whence?” “That is precisely the thing. You should have said, ‘M. d’Alembert, if there is no other world, where may you happen to come from now?’”



## XVIII.

1785. FEB.

## THE DIAMOND NECKLACE IS DELIVERED.

THE Cardinal de Rohan obtained possession of the Necklace early on the morning of the 1st of February, 1785, and had not long to wait ere he was honoured with the queen's commands to deliver it into her royal custody. We shall give two accounts of how this delivery was effected—namely, the story told by the countess, and the statement made by the cardinal in his memorial.

The cardinal of course expected, from having rendered the queen a service for which she could not feel otherwise than grateful, that he would have been permitted to deliver the rich jewel to Marie-Antoinette in person, and when he received from Madame de la Motte the following note, purporting to be written by the queen, he imagined his expectations were on the point of being realized:—

“ This evening (Feb. 1), at nine o'clock, you must be at the countess's house (at Versailles) with the casket and in the usual costume. Do not leave until you hear from me.”

The countess lodged, as the reader will remember, at “ La Belle Image,” in the Place Dauphine, and thither, on this sharp winter's night—it was a hard frost, and the ground was almost like glass—the cardinal proceeded, wrapped up in a long great-coat, and wearing a slouched hat that concealed his features. One can imagine the countess's nervous state on this eventful evening—can see her posted at the window on the watch, peering through the frost on the panes into the dark and almost silent Place, eager for a glimpse of the grand almoner with the coveted treasure. At last two figures are seen crossing the broad square from the Rue de la Pompe, at the end of which is the Hôtel de Rohan—one is the cardinal, the other a man-servant he has brought with him, who carries the casket, and whom he dismisses a few doors off “ La Belle Image.”

"At half-past eight o'clock," says Madame de la Motte, "the cardinal called upon me in his disguise, carrying under his arm the casket containing the Necklace, which he set down on a chest of drawers. At half-past nine Lesclos,<sup>1</sup> that faithful messenger of her majesty, whom she so often employed in delicate missions—Lesclos, a man perfectly well known to the cardinal, and the necessary confidant of all the little irregularities mentioned in the correspondence between him and the queen—called upon me with a letter from her majesty which ran thus :—

"The minister (the king) is at present with me, and I cannot tell how long he will stay. You know the person I send. Deliver the casket to him, and stay where you are. I do not despair of seeing *thee* to-day."

"The cardinal," continues the countess, "having read this note, delivered to the faithful Lesclos, with his own hands, the casket containing the Necklace which he had himself deposited on the chest of drawers. Lesclos went out."<sup>2</sup>

Such is Madame de la Motte's statement. Let us compare it with the cardinal's, which we extract from one of the memorials produced in his defence at the trial :—

"On his (the cardinal's) arrival at Versailles he called upon Madame de la Motte, who was living in the Place Dauphine ; he took with him Schreibert, his *valet de chambre*, who had charge of the casket. The cardinal, when they had reached the house, took it from him and went up-stairs by himself. He found Madame de la Motte alone, and presented to her the rich burden he was carrying.

"Some time after a man, who announced himself as a messenger from the queen, entered the apartment. The cardinal withdrew cautiously into an alcove which was half open. The man delivered a note. Madame de la Motte sent him for a moment outside the room, then came towards the cardinal and read to him the letter containing the order for delivering up the casket to the bearer. The man was then called in again, the casket was given into his hands,

<sup>1</sup> According to the official documents relating to the "Affaire du Collier" the correct name of this individual was Desclaux.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte," p. 99.

and he took his departure. . . . Who was that man? To the cardinal he seemed to be the same that he had descried in the park of Versailles on the night of the 11th of August, 1784, close to Mademoiselle d'Oliva."<sup>1</sup>

We will undertake to answer the cardinal's interrogatory. The messenger was an accomplice of the countess's : none other than the forger Rétaux de Villette, made up for the occasion "with large black eyebrows, and pale face," and the letter of which he was the bearer was one of his own numerous forgeries. At any rate the countess's *femme de chambre*, Rosalie Briffaut, deposed to having opened the door to him at the precise hour on that particular night, when he immediately entered the countess's apartment.

Success is attained at last ! The great fraud is consummated ! The woman who when a child we have seen running along the streets with naked feet, the tatters of poverty her only covering, and begging of lords and ladies to "bestow a few sous on a descendant of Henry II. of Valois, King of France," has at length obtained possession of the famed Diamond Necklace, valued at 1,600,000, livres, or £64,000, sterling ! The jewellers, delighted at having got the troublesome piece of *bijouterie* off their hands, invite the countess to a grand dinner, and madame being pleased to accept the invitation, the affair came off on the 12th of February, when doubtless both the countess and her absent friend the cardinal were toasted in bumpers of the choicest Burgundy, and more than one fine speech was made which, had it been accurately reported, would have read rather curiously a few months afterwards.

It had been arranged, it seems, between the jewellers and Laporte, Achette, some baron—name unknown, but said to be a relative of the cardinal's—and a money-lending goldsmith named Grenier,<sup>2</sup> the same who had purchased the De la Motte pension,

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire pour le Cardinal de Rohan," p. 39. All the persons concerned in the famous nocturnal meeting differed with regard to the date at which it took place. Madame de la Motte, as we have already stated, fixes it on the 28th of July.

<sup>2</sup> Miswritten "Regnier" in the official records. Regnier was another goldsmith with whom the De la Mottes had considerable dealings, bought their service of plate of, etc.



and who, we expect, had got mixed up in the Necklace affair through his connection with the countess, that a commission of 200,000 livres was to be paid to the negotiators, of which amount madame says it was proposed she should receive one-half in articles of jewellery, such as diamond rings and earrings, a couple of solitaires, a locket set with diamonds, and a watch and chain for herself, with a couple of diamond rings and a watch and chain set with diamonds for her husband. When Laporte sent her a written memorandum of these conditions, and begged her acceptance of them, she declined, and desired him to say no more on the subject, as she had done so little towards effecting the sale of the Necklace, and as, moreover, it was not her habit to receive presents for services rendered!<sup>1</sup>

When the count, who had not yet been let into the secret of his wife's intention with regard to the Necklace, came to hear of this refusal, he blamed her very much, and it was arranged with Grenier that he should inform the other negotiators of the countess's willingness to accept the proposed presents. It does not appear, however, that she ever received them. The commission was probably dependent on the payment of the purchase-money for the Necklace, and as this was never paid, the arrangement with regard to the commission most likely fell to the ground.

Baudard de Saint-James, treasurer-general of the navy, and principal creditor of the crown jewellers, is equally delighted with the latter at the Necklace being at last sold. He has now before him the pleasant prospect of receiving twenty-four livres in the louis on his large debt, and from a feeling of gratitude presses, through Böhmer and Bassenge, the offer of his services upon the cardinal, to whom, he said, he should be proud to be of use. The cardinal, who, with all his large resources, is continually in want of money, knew, we suppose, what this meant, for he forthwith borrowed 50,000 livres from the treasurer-general of the navy on his simple note of hand.<sup>2</sup>

This celebrated financier's real name was Baudard; but when he had grown rich he made an addition to it, and called himself Saint-

<sup>1</sup> "Premier Interrogatoire de Madame de la Motte."

<sup>2</sup> "Premier Interrogatoire du Cardinal de Rohan."



James, after the village from whence he came. This name he in his turn bestowed on a celebrated château and park still existing at the end of the Avenue de Neuilly, the same in which the Duke of Wellington and his staff took up their quarters when the Allies entered Paris after the battle of Waterloo. It had formerly been the residence of the famous Cardinal de Retz, afterwards of Le Normand (uncle of Madame de Maintenon, and the richest *fermier-général* of his time), by whom the château was rebuilt, and subsequently of our treasurer-general of the navy, who dissipated his immense fortune upon it in fancies of the wildest kind. He first enlarged the château, then redecorated and furnished it in the most magnificent style; next extended and relaid out the park, planted miniature woods, constructed artificial grottos and waterfalls, erected Chinese temples and Turkish kiosques, and formed a superb winter-garden, in which he accumulated all the rare flora of Asia and America. The feature of the park, however, was its grand rock, the quarrying and transit of which is said to have cost Saint-James the incredible sum of 1,600,000 livres, or £64,000<sup>1</sup>—exactly the price of the Diamond Necklace—and which is known even at the present day by the name of “Saint-James’s Folly.” What with his reckless expenditure upon this château and park, his expensive mistresses, his jobbing in the funds, his allowing himself to be drawn into all manner of wild undertakings, the promoters of which, knowing alike his stupidity and his greed, invariably had recourse to him, and his subsequent losses by Böhmer and Bassenge and others, it is not to be wondered at that Baudard de Saint-James came to grief at last—failed, in fact, for a million sterling, got sent to the Bastille, and only left it to die of poverty and grief a short time afterwards.

<sup>1</sup> “ Histoire du Bois de Boulogne,” par J. Lobet, p. 141.

## XIX.

1785. FEB.—AUG.

## THE DIAMOND NECKLACE VANISHES !

THE gigantic swindle it must be confessed had been effected in a masterly manner. Weeks, and even months, passed by, and no one seemed to entertain the slightest suspicion that any fraud had been perpetrated. But this was only the calm that precedes the storm. The crown jewellers, Böhmer and Bassenge, made it no secret that they had succeeded in disposing of their Necklace. They, however, gave out that it had been purchased by the Sultan of Turkey for a favourite sultana. Böhmer afterwards stated that they did this at the request of the cardinal, who had received the queen's commands to that effect. Of course Madame de la Motte was the real person who caused this report to be spread to allay impertinent curiosity. The cardinal, flattering himself that he had placed his sovereign under an obligation, was expecting both favour and power, and was confiding these hopes rather incautiously to his friends. The De la Mottes were openly living in almost Oriental luxury. Nobody would have supposed that any great wrong had been done.

On the 3rd of February, two days after the Necklace had been delivered to the cardinal, he met Böhmer and Bassenge at Versailles. "Well," said he to them, "have you made your very humble acknowledgments to her majesty for having purchased your Necklace?" The jewellers, careless upon this point now the Necklace was fairly off their hands, had not done so ; the cardinal upbraided them with their neglect, a fact admitted at the trial.<sup>1</sup>

Months glide by without the slightest suspicion arising, although the grand almoner is somewhat puzzled at the queen never wearing the Necklace in public. Every time he meets the jewellers

<sup>1</sup> "Premier Interrogatoire du Cardinal de Rohan."

he repeats his inquiry whether they have humbly thanked the queen, and renews his very earnest recommendation for them to do so. At length, in the last week of June, after the countess has more than once hinted to him that the queen thinks the Necklace dear, the cardinal receives a letter written in her majesty's name by the forger Villette, complaining of the excessive price of the jewel, and demanding a reduction of 200,000 livres, in which case 700,000 instead of 400,000 livres would be paid on the 1st of August, "otherwise," the letter went on to say, "the article will be returned."<sup>1</sup> The crown jewellers murmur, as well they might, at this unexpected demand, but rather than be again burthened with the Necklace, after consulting with Saint-James, they give an unwilling consent to the new arrangement. When all is finally settled, by the advice of the cardinal they address to the queen the following letter, the very words of which are dictated by the grand almoner himself :

"Madame,

"We are extremely happy to think that the last arrangements which have been proposed to us, and to which we have submitted with respectful zeal, will be received as a new instance of our submission and devotedness to your majesty's commands, and we feel truly rejoiced to think that the most beautiful set of diamonds in the world will be worn by the best and greatest of queens.

"BÖHMER AND BASSENGE.

"July 12, 1785."<sup>2</sup>

When the above letter was written, some slight feelings of uneasiness respecting the Necklace had taken possession of the minds of the two partners ; for Marie-Antoinette had appeared in public on several occasions when such an ornament might very properly have been worn, but without displaying it. Böhmer had sought interviews with the queen, who had carefully avoided him, fearing to be again pestered with his importunities, and, since his threat of committing suicide, regarding him as partially deranged.

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 350, and "Premier Interrogatoire du Cardinal de Rohan."

<sup>2</sup> Déposition de Bassenge.



The cardinal, as we have already remarked, was perplexed by the circumstance that the queen did not wear the Necklace, and still more so by the freezing aversion she continued to manifest whenever they met in public. The fictitious letters too had become more rare, as well as much briefer than heretofore, and very cold. The apprehension mutually shared by the cardinal and the crown jewellers may be traced in the letter just quoted, in which "the most beautiful set of diamonds in the world" is pointedly alluded to, and something like a hint given that they ought to be "worn by the best and greatest of queens."

This letter was delivered by Böhmer to Marie-Antoinette with a diamond epaulette and buckles which the king had ordered of the crown jewellers as presents to the Duke d'Angoulême on the day of his christening. The queen, who had just returned from mass, went at once into her library, where Madame Campan was present. "She held the note in her hand ; she read it to me," says Madame Campan, "observing that as I had in the morning guessed the enigmas in the *Mercur*, I could no doubt discover the meaning of this, which that madman Böhmer had just handed to her. These were her very words. The note contained a request not to forget him,<sup>1</sup> and expressions of his happiness at seeing her in possession of the most beautiful diamonds that could be found in Europe. As she finished reading the note she twisted it up and burnt it at a taper which was standing lighted in her library for sealing letters, and merely recommended me, when I should see Böhmer, to request an explanation of it. 'Has he assorted some new ornaments?'<sup>2</sup> added the queen. 'I should be very vexed if he has done so, for I don't intend to make use of his services any longer.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Madame Campan's memory appears to have been at fault here.

<sup>2</sup> The reader will have observed that specific mention is not made in the jewellers' letter of the Necklace itself, which Marie-Antoinette, in common with everybody else, had no doubt heard had been sold to the Sultan. Besides, only some two months previously the queen had purchased of Böhmer a magnificent pair of diamond earrings at the cost, it was reported, of 800,000 livres, and why might not this letter in the queen's mind have borne reference to these rather than to the Diamond Necklace? See "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. i. p. 562.

<sup>3</sup> "Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. p. 227.



In the middle of the month of July, but a very short time before the first instalment fell due, the countess, feeling the necessity for gaining time, called upon the Cardinal de Rohan, and told him that the queen would be constrained to devote the 700,000 livres, which she had put aside for the payment of the moiety of the purchase-money due on the 1st of August, to other purposes. She begged that the cardinal would see the jewellers and obtain a postponement, which the queen thought could not be at all difficult,<sup>1</sup> until the 1st of October. The cardinal received this message with evident consternation, whereupon Madame de la Motte, to reassure him, told him that she had seen in the queen's hands notes to the amount of 700,000 livres, which her majesty had designed for the payment of the instalment in question, and a day or two afterwards she would appear to have brought him a letter from the queen on the subject.<sup>2</sup> There is no help for it—for needs must when such a charioteer as the countess drives—so the cardinal does as he is bid, somewhat out of temper, it is true, by this time with her majesty's unbusiness-like ways, which bid fair, he tells the jewellers, “to turn his head.” Böhmer and Bassenge show such evident signs of dissatisfaction at this new variation of the contract, that to quiet them the prince feels constrained to tell them a fib, namely, that he had *himself* seen in the queen's hands the 700,000 livres in question. This statement he repeats to Baudard de Saint-James, whose interest in the matter we know, and who makes it his business to be kept informed of any hitches that arise in this troublesome Necklace affair. Prompted, no doubt, by Madame de la Motte, the cardinal seems to have hinted to the financier that it would be a good opportunity for him to secure the queen's favour, and with it the *cordons rouges*, of which Saint-James was particularly ambitious, by lending her majesty this 700,000 livres, for the payment of the first instalment. Saint-James was not unwilling; still he was over cautious, and said that on hearing one word from the queen the amount should be forthcoming.<sup>3</sup> Georgel says that the reason the affair fell through was because the forger Villette was, as will after-

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoires pour servir,” etc., par l'Abbé Georgel, vol. ii. p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix to the present work, p. 394.

<sup>3</sup> “Premier Interrogatoire du Cardinal de Rohan.”

wards appear, away at that particular juncture at Bar-sur-Aube, and the written word consequently was not forthcoming until it was too late,<sup>1</sup> owing to which lucky accident Saint-James saved his 700,000 livres, which the countess would certainly have spirited away in her usual fashion if the chance had only been afforded her.

After consulting with their most pressing creditors, Böhmer and Bassenge gave a reluctant consent to the postponement asked for ; but while the affair is still under consideration, the countess, getting alarmed, brings the cardinal 30,000 livres, which she tells him the queen has sent as interest on the retarded payment. Thirty thousand francs as interest on seven hundred thousand francs for two months, or at the rate of nearly twenty-six per cent., and the client, too, a queen ! Madame de la Motte had evidently foreseen the famous axiom of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington, though in an inverted form. With her, bad security implied high interest.

This 30,000 livres, we are told by the Abbé Georgel, only confirmed the most credulous of mortals in the conviction he entertained of the entire truth of all that Madame de la Motte had asserted. He at once hastened to the jewellers, who accepted the amount, not as interest, but on account of the principal. A few days afterwards, namely, on the 3rd of August, Böhmer, who occasionally visited the father-in-law of Madame Campan, went down to his country-house at Crespy—whether or not by invitation from Madame Campan does not appear—when Madame Campan repeated to him all that the queen had desired her to say. Böhmer, she tells us, seemed petrified, and asked how it was that the queen had been unable to understand the meaning of the letter he had presented to her.

“I read it myself,” replied Madame Campan, “and I could make nothing of it.”

Böhmer observed that he was not surprised at that, as there was a certain mystery in the affair respecting which she was ignorant, but of which he would inform her fully if she would accord him a private interview.

“When I had got rid of the persons who required my presence in the drawing-room,” says Madame Campan, “I went with Böhmer

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoires pour servir,” etc., par l'Abbé Georgel, vol. ii. p. 80.

down one of the garden-walks." Here the promised explanation was given, on hearing which Madame Campan was "so struck with horror," "so absorbed in grief," that a storm of thunder and rain came on while they were talking together without exciting her attention. During this conversation Böhmer stated that the queen, having changed her mind respecting his "grand Necklace," and having determined to purchase it, had employed the Cardinal de Rohan as her agent in the transaction.

Madame Campan at once told the crown jeweller that he was deceived, for the queen had never spoken to the cardinal since his return from Vienna, and there was not an individual at court less favourably looked upon than the grand almoner.

"You are deceived yourself, madame," replied Böhmer; "the queen must see him in private, for it was to his eminence that she gave 30,000 livres which were paid me on account; she took them in his presence<sup>1</sup> out of the little *secrétaire* of Sèvres porcelain next the fireplace in her boudoir. This the cardinal told me himself."

Böhmer further stated that he had in his possession all the notes signed by the queen, and that he had even been obliged to show these to various bankers in order to induce them to grant him an extension of time for his payments.

Madame Campan, thunderstruck at what she heard, assured poor Böhmer that he was the victim of a detestable plot; whereupon the jeweller confessed that he began to feel alarmed, as the cardinal had declared to him that the queen would be certain to wear the Necklace on Whit Sunday, and he, Böhmer, was greatly astonished when he saw that she did not have it on. On asking Madame Campan what she thought he ought to do, she advised him to go at once to the Baron de Breteuil, and tell him candidly all that had passed, and be ruled entirely by him. Instead of doing this Böhmer hurried off to the cardinal. What transpired at this interview is not known, but the following memorandum, in the grand almoner's hand-writing, was said to have been found in a drawer at the Hôtel de Strasbourg at the time a search was made for the cardinal's papers :

<sup>1</sup> This, if true, was a piece of vain boasting on the cardinal's part, for it is quite certain that he received the thirty thousand livres from Madame de la Motte, who professed to have brought them from the queen.



"On this day, 3rd August, Böhmer went to Madame Campan's country house, and she told him that the queen had never had the Necklace, and that he had been cheated."

Böhmer must have spoken to the cardinal beforehand of his contemplated visit to Crespy, for the cardinal admitted that, having regard to the queen's injunction to keep her name a perfect secret in the affair of the Necklace, he had urged Böhmer not to speak to Madame Campan on the subject, and in the event of any questions being asked him to say the Necklace had been sent abroad.<sup>1</sup>

The half-crazy jeweller next hastened to the Little Trianon, but failed in obtaining an interview with Marie-Antoinette. A day or two afterwards, the queen having sent for Madame Campan to rehearse with her the part of *Rosina*, which she was to play in Beaumarchais' comedy, "The Barber of Seville," at her private theatre at the Little Trianon, took an opportunity of asking her why she had sent Böhmer to her (who had been to speak to her, saying that he came at Madame Campan's request), when she did not wish to see him.

"The expression," remarks Madame Campan, "which this man's name produced on my features must have been very marked, for the queen observed it, and commenced questioning me. I begged her to see him; I assured her that it was necessary to her tranquillity; that an intrigue was being carried on of which she was ignorant; that it was a grave one, since agreements signed by her had been shown to people who had lent money to Böhmer. Her surprise and annoyance were great. She made me relate several times the whole of my conversation with him, and complained bitterly of the vexation she felt at the circulation of forged notes signed with her name; but she could not conceive how the cardinal could be involved in the affair. This was a labyrinth to her, and her mind was lost in it. She ordered me to remain at Trianon, while she sent off a courier to Paris, under a pretext which I have now forgotten. He returned the next morning, the very day of the representation of the comedy, which was the last amusement the queen allowed herself in this retreat."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Deuxième Interrogatoire du Cardinal de Rohan."

<sup>2</sup> "Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. pp. 9, 12, 279.



## XX.

1785. FEB.—JUNE.

THE DIAMONDS ARE DISPERSED.—COUNT DE LA MOTTE GOES TO ENGLAND ON BUSINESS.

THE De la Mottes had spirited away the Necklace it is true, but how were they to turn it into hard cash? Every working jeweller in France knew this famed piece of *bijouterie* by repute almost as well as if he had had a hand in its manufacture. The only plan, therefore, was for them, somehow or other, to remove the diamonds from their settings, and to dispose of them piecemeal. The first the De la Mottes contrived to do after a fashion by means of a knife or some such instrument; the last they found a difficult and even dangerous undertaking.

On the 15th of February<sup>1</sup> the countess's first secretary and the forger of the queen's signature to the contract with the jewellers, Rétaux de Villette, who was of course as deep in the plot as the De la Mottes themselves, was intrusted with about forty of the smaller stones to sell to two Jew diamond-merchants named Adam and Vidal for four hundred francs apiece. Vidal, believing the diamonds to be stolen, gave information to the police, and the consequence was that Villette was arrested and subjected to an examination, in the course of which he was constrained to give up

<sup>1</sup> It is important that this date should be noted; for the circumstances which transpired on it, and which are chronicled in the police records, effectually dispose of the theory advanced by certain writers—such as M. Alexandre Dumas, in his “Louis XVI.” (vol. iii. p. 194, *et seq.*)—who maintain that Marie-Antoinette really purchased the Necklace through the instrumentality of the Cardinal de Rohan, and, after keeping it something like three months, returned it to the jewellers by the hands of Madame de la Motte, on finding that she was unable to raise the money to meet the first instalment. While asserting that Madame de la Motte was really the queen's confidant, the writers referred to are forced to admit that she betrayed her trust, and converted the Necklace to her own use.

the name of the Countess de la Motte as that of the person who had intrusted him with the diamonds to sell. Madame being well known of old to M. Lenoir, lieutenant-general of police, to whom it will be remembered one of her begging letters was referred,<sup>1</sup> and her reputation being of the shadiest in her particular "*quartier*," M. Lenoir gave directions to the inspector who had arrested Villette to make diligent search at the "*Bureau de Sureté*" for information respecting any recent robbery of diamonds. Nothing whatever being discovered to implicate Villette in the least degree, he was discharged, and the diamonds were restored to him.<sup>2</sup>

This was a narrow escape for Villette, who naturally enough declined putting his liberty in jeopardy a second time. The consequence was that, burdened though the De la Mottes now were with diamonds, they were unable to turn them to profitable account. If attempting to dispose of a few of the smallest stones excited all this suspicion, whatever would come to pass, thought they, if any quantity of the larger brilliants were publicly offered in the market? The thieves are for the moment at their wits' ends, and do not appear to have been particularly fertile in their expedients, for what next suggests itself to them is to get hold of a young fellow of dubious character calling himself Jean-Charles-Vincent de Bette d'Etienneville, whom Rétaux de Villette has met with at some café—singularly enough the Café Valois—and under the assumed characters of the Dame de Courville, personated by Madame de la Motte, the Sieur Augeard, her steward, personated by Villette, and the Councillor Marsilly, personated by the Count de la Motte, to make him their pretended confidant in a cock-and-bull story about the lady desiring with a view of legitimatizing a child she has had by some very great nobleman, to get married to some gentleman of title, to whom a bonus of one hundred thousand livres would be given on the day of the wedding. They represented, however, that before this arrangement could be carried into effect, it would be necessary to dispose of the lady's diamonds, which were valued at four hundred and thirty-two thousand livres; and it was pro-

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Déposition de Vidal, and Déposition de Brugnières, inspecteur de police. Brugnières was the police agent who arrested Mirabeau and Madame de Monnier in Holland, after their elopement from France.

posed to Bette that he should take them to Holland, and sell them to the diamond merchants of Amsterdam—madame of course either accompanying him, or dogging his footsteps to ensure his not giving them the slip. Bette, although he found out a gentleman of title ready and willing to save a lady's reputation at the price of one hundred thousand livres, cash down, seems to have drawn back at this latter suggestion, which foreboded danger he fancied; and all madame's powers of fascination and persuasion proving of no avail, this abortive scheme had to be abandoned.<sup>1</sup>

All this was of course very disheartening. To have plotted and schemed, and watched and waited, and after doubts and misgivings, and positive fears and dangers, to have at length achieved success, and then for success to prove barren, was something awful. For the moment it seemed as though there was nothing to be done except to barter away as many diamonds as they could, and to have others reset to wear as personal ornaments. It was certainly no use hiding so much brilliancy under a bushel. At the commencement of March we find the Count de la Motte strolling into the shop of Furet, clockmaker to the king, Rue Saint-Honoré, with whom he had had previous dealings, and buying from him three clocks, price three thousand seven hundred and twenty livres, and giving him a couple of diamonds, which the jeweller values at two thousand seven hundred livres, on account. A day or two afterwards madame herself calls with a number of diamonds, which she wishes to have mounted encircling a watch; but Furet explains to her that the stones are too large for this purpose, and suggests mounting them as bracelets.<sup>2</sup> She also exchanges a diamond with a Jew for a couple of china pomade pots, and pays a visit to the goldsmith Regnier—of whom she had bought a pair of diamond bracelets and the handsome service of silver plate with which it will be remembered she astonished her Bar-sur-Aube connections in the preceding year, paying for the same with the cardinal's money—and commissions him to set a couple of large diamonds, which she brings with her, in rings, one for herself and the other for her husband.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire pour Bette d'Etienville," and Déposition de Bette d'Etienville. See also Appendix, p. 409.

<sup>2</sup> Déposition de Furet.

<sup>3</sup> Déposition de Regnier.



Transactions of this character, however, did not put them in possession of the one thing needful—namely, ready cash. Diamonds were with them as plentiful as blackberries, but diamonds are not meat and drink, and are at best but an indifferent circulating medium, and the De la Mottes were getting painfully hard up. The countess, however, proved herself as usual equal to the occasion.

Unknown to her husband, she sells a parcel of twenty-two diamonds to one Paris, a jeweller—to whom she had been introduced by M. Filleul, a lawyer of Bar-sur-Aube, and an occasional visitor at the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles—for the sum of fifteen thousand livres, and subsequently disposes of sixteen more diamonds to the same person for the sum of sixteen thousand livres.<sup>1</sup> This furnished her with sufficient funds to pack the Count de la Motte over to England with a letter of credit for a couple of thousand crowns,<sup>2</sup> and the bulk of the larger diamonds belonging to the Necklace. These diamonds, which the countess had first declared were sold at the request and on behalf of the Cardinal de Rohan, she afterwards pretended she had received as a gift from the queen, and it will be noticed at the outset of the following narrative that the count takes up this cue, although he stated to the English jewellers that the gems were a family heirloom. This narrative of the count's is not wanting in circumstantiality, still, like everything else emanating from the De la Motte mint, it has the customary false stamp upon it, more particularly in that portion relating to the amount said to have been received for the diamonds which the count succeeded in disposing of, as we shall by-and-by show. It should be remembered that this statement was not made public until long after the fact of the sale and purchase of the diamonds in question had been proved beyond a shadow of doubt by the English jewellers concerned in the transaction.

"I arrived in London," says the count, "on the 17th of April, 1785, with the Chevalier O'Neil, who was perfectly acquainted with the object of my journey. As he knew the countess was

<sup>1</sup> "Premier Interrogatoire de Madame de la Motte." Also *post*, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> Déposition de Perregaux, banquier.



admitted to the queen, I made no mystery to him *of the present she had received from her majesty*, nor of my motive for parting with the diamonds in London. I had a letter of credit on Messrs. Morland and Co., to whom I went the day after my arrival. On making inquiry for the most noted jewellers, I was directed to Jefferys and to Gray; I first saw Jefferys, who lived in Piccadilly, told him I had some diamonds to dispose of, and left him my address. The next morning he came to my lodgings, where I showed him the eighteen oval stones that belonged to the Necklace, and acquainted him with the price *which the cardinal had fixed*. He requested me to let him take them home in order to examine them, and offered me his acknowledgment, which I accepted. He promised to bring me an answer in four days; the next day I set out with the Chevalier O'Neil for Newmarket. During five days that we remained there, I gained by betting nine hundred and sixty guineas, sixty of which I expended in travelling expenses, the purchase of clothes, and various other articles.

"On my return to London, I went to Jefferys, who told me that a gentleman had offered four thousand pounds sterling; that he could not pay ready money, but would give notes at six and twelve months' date, and would find ample security. I told him I would consider of it, took back my diamonds, and returned him his acknowledgment. The same day I went to Gray's in New Bond Street,<sup>1</sup> left with him the largest oval stone, and directed him to come to me the next day, when I would let him see a greater quantity; the same day I purchased of him a self-winding watch. The next day he came with a Jew named Eliason. I intrusted him with the same stones I had left in Jefferys' hands; he told me he had already examined them, and that a broker whom Jefferys employed had brought them to him. I then let him know the offer that Jefferys had made me, and the terms of payment, adding, that not knowing Jefferys, nor the person he had recommended to me, I did not choose to part with so considerable a property upon credit. That besides, I proposed staying but a few days in

<sup>1</sup> Gray's shop was No. 13, and the largest in New Bond Street. The house, which is within two doors of Long's hotel, must have been quite a new building at the time the Count de la Motte had dealings with the crack London jeweller of that day.

London, whither I might probably never again return, and that I did not think proper to leave anything behind me that might create any anxiety.

“He answered that I was perfectly in the right, and that if we agreed on the price he would pay me ready money. I told him my price: he took away the diamonds, and promised to bring an answer the following day; which he did, but still accompanied by Gray. He made me an offer of three thousand guineas, which I would not accept. After pointing out stones that had flaws and other defects they left me, with an assurance that the offer they made me for ready money was very adequate; and that I should not meet with a more eligible one. I let them go away, telling them I would keep my diamonds rather than part with them at that price.

“Next morning they returned, and asked to inspect the diamonds a second time: I permitted them. O’Neil was present, as well as my *valet de chambre*. Eliason then drew out of his pocket a pearl necklace, consisting of two very beautiful rows, a snuff-box set with brilliants and pearls, with a medallion on the lid, and several parcels of pearl seed. He valued these several articles at about five hundred and sixty pounds sterling. I said that if he would give me four thousand pounds, together with those articles, the bargain was struck. He exclaimed loudly, and then made a motion to go, offering three thousand pounds and the articles I had selected—a proposal which I rejected.

“In the interim Jefferys made a second application; I told him my resolution was to sell them for ready money only. I then delivered to him thirteen stones of the first quality I possessed; the two finest, which belonged to the Necklace, not having been given to the countess; and no doubt but the queen made a present of them to Mademoiselle Dorvat, or some other woman in her intimacy, for there were several which were similar. I had selected two, one intended to be set in a ring for the countess, the other for myself. Regnier, my jeweller at Paris, set them before my departure for London.<sup>1</sup> Both myself and the countess commonly wore them. The cardinal has seen them both.

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 140.

"I called the next day at Gray's to purchase several articles in steel; there I found Eliason, who told me I was over-tenacious, that his offer was a very fair one. He showed me some very fine pearls for a pair of bracelets, and a ring forming a neck-button; I went into a separate apartment, where we entered into a bargain. After two hours' difficulty on both sides we at length agreed upon a price for the eighteen oval stones, viz., three thousand pounds sterling ready money; the pearl necklace of two rows, valued at two hundred pounds, the snuff-box one hundred and forty, the pearl-seed one hundred and twenty, and a diamond star which I took in Gray's shop, valued at three hundred.

"This was the first bargain. When I had received the money and jewels, he told me that Jefferys' broker had brought him other diamonds which were no doubt my property; that if I chose to sell them, I had better do business with him than with another: that I should gain by it the commission and some ready money. I went the same day and took out of Jefferys' hands the thirteen stones I had left in his possession. He had come to the knowledge of my dealing with Gray, and being vexed at having missed the opportunity of making the purchase himself, he upon that account pretended, as will be seen hereafter, that he had acted respecting the diamonds with more propriety than Gray, for that he, Jefferys, surmising the diamonds to have been stolen, had given notice at a police office (which in fact was a falsehood<sup>1</sup>), and had refused to buy them. He afterwards the more readily made a declaration to this purpose before a certain notary named Dubourg, at the request of M. de Carbonnières, agent for the cardinal, as he said he believed me to be in Turkey, and depended upon never seeing me again in England. His behaviour to me when I returned to London will show how *delicate* this Jefferys was in his conduct; since he came to me after judgment was passed to ask me whether I had not any diamonds to dispose of, telling me he would be the purchaser, and allow me a greater advantage than Gray would. It will soon be seen what answer I made him, and the method I took in order to make apparent what the justificatory writings produced by the cardinal consisted in.

<sup>1</sup> Which in fact was *not* a falsehood. See Jefferys' deposition, given in the "Pièces Justificatives pour le Cardinal de Rohan."



“The thirteen stones taken from Jefferys I carried to Gray, telling him I would come the next day to his shop myself, and that he might appoint Eliason to be there at the same hour. The departure of the Chevalier O’Neil prevented my keeping the appointment. He had received a letter from his brother and another from his colonel, requiring his return with all possible speed to join his regiment by the 15th of May. He had not been able to obtain a longer leave of absence as he hoped ; the troops the emperor was then marching towards Holland were the occasion of the orders he had received : he was therefore forced to leave me in London. He took charge of several purchases I had made, and of the parcel of pearls I had got in exchange. As he went by the coach, he took his place the day before at Mr. Guyon’s office, where he found the Capuchin McDermott, a professed spy, who for the things made known to me by his own confession (and those certainly are the most harmless) deserves to be made an example of. The Capuchin knew the Chevalier O’Neil, with whom he renewed acquaintance ; and finding in the course of conversation he had come over with me, he begged he would introduce him to me, which the chevalier did. He told me that as I did not understand English he would be my interpreter, and do me all the little services in his power. I accepted his obliging offer, and that day he dined with me. He had been procurator of his order at Vassy, six leagues distant from Bar-sur-Aube ; he knew my family, and had seen me, by his account, a child.

“In this, my first interview, I did not communicate to him anything relative to my having diamonds to dispose of ; in short, I acquainted him with no particulars beyond that I had money to remit to Paris. He answered that he knew a merchant in the City named Motteaux, that if I negotiated through his means he would allow me the same advantage as to traders, whereas Mr. Hammersly would deal with me as with a nobleman. He calculated the benefit I should reap by placing that sum with Mr. Motteaux, and as it seemed to me rather considerable, and he persuaded me that Mr. Hammersly would not make me the same allowance, I determined to go to Mr. Motteaux, whither he accompanied me. I delivered to him the three thousand pounds sterling I had already received on the former bargain.”

McDermott, it seems, when he and the Count de la Motte were taking a stroll together in Kensington Gardens, questioned the count, in an off-hand Irish way, as to the sources of his wealth, and hinted that he must have made some lucky coups at the gaming-table—one had not to know the count long to discover that he was a practised gambler—whereupon the count replied, in the coolest manner possible, that he was not partial to “play.” “The truth is,” said he, “I married Madame de la Motte, with her slender income of eight hundred francs, against the wishes of my family, as I had not a single franc of my own; but we came up to Paris, when Madame and the Countess d’Artois recommended us to several of the ministers, who in their turn recommended the countess to lay her case before the queen. She did so, was taken into favour, and hence our present affluence.”<sup>1</sup>

“Let us return now to the thirteen diamonds I had left with Gray. When the Chevalier O’Neil was gone I went to that jeweller, who immediately sent into the City to let Eliason know I waited for him at his house. He came, but we made no bargain; eight or ten days passed away in fruitless meetings and considerations. They often told me they wondered how a gentleman should have such a knowledge of diamonds as to ascertain the exact value of them; but that I certainly must be sensible that such articles were difficult to dispose of; that they should perhaps be obliged to keep them two or three years upon their hands, during which time the interest of the money was lost, and other things to the same purport. At length, after much trouble and delay, we came to a settlement for the thirteen stones, for the sum of two thousand pounds sterling, ready money; a ring, convertible into a neck button, valued at two hundred pounds sterling, and for which I lately got but one hundred; a parcel of very fine pearls for the mounting of a pair of bracelets, valued at a hundred and fifty pounds; another parcel of pearls for sixty pounds, and a pair of girandole earrings, valued at five hundred pounds. Such were the two bargains I made with Eliason in presence of Gray. Six diamonds, which formed the trefoil of two oval ones, I exchanged at Gray’s for a medallion set round with brilliants, two steel swords,

<sup>1</sup> Déposition de McDermott.

a shirt-pin, a pair of asparagus tongs, and a wine syphon. Four more diamonds which were between the rose and the four tassels were likewise exchanged at Gray's for a ring, still in my possession, a small hoop of diamond-seeds, a lady's pocket-case, in satin and gold, with all its fittings, a pair of steel buckles, and a miniature.

"I had sixty diamonds left, arising from the tassels, twenty-two from the festoons, and the stone which formed the button. Out of the sixty I selected twenty-eight, which I gave to Gray to set in drop earrings; and the two-and-twenty of the festoons to make into a necklace of one single row. I then had left only thirty-two stones arising from the tassels, and stone forming the button. I chose the sixteen finest, which I kept unmounted, and the remaining sixteen I parted with to Gray, at the rate of eighty livres the carat, out of which I bought in his shop sundry small matters not worth mentioning. Thus terminated all my negotiations for diamonds in London.

"I had still remaining the button stone, which I showed to Mr. Morland, asking him whether he could not find an opportunity of selling it to my advantage. He said he would let an acquaintance inspect it, and let me know his answer in two or three days. He did so by telling me he had the stone in his bank, and that one thousand guineas had been offered for it, which he believed might be increased to twelve hundred. He proposed my calling in Pall Mall to take the diamond, and from thence go into the city to Mr. Duval's, the person who made the offer; but that he believed it was not for himself. We met with Mr. Duval, who showed me several articles in jewellery. I told him my design was not to purchase any, since I was, on the contrary, come to treat with him about a diamond which Mr. Morland had given him to inspect. After surveying it a second time, he told me that the person to whom he had shown it offered but one thousand pounds, which he (Duval) looked upon to be its full value. I took back the diamond, and resolved to keep it till I found a means to dispose of it more advantageously. The same day I gave it to Gray to set in a ring.

"Let us now proceed to the enumeration of those stones that were sold and exchanged in Paris. Before my departure for Eng-



land, the countess had delivered to M. Filleul some diamonds, which she had kept privately, that had formed part of the festoons and knots of the tassels ; she desired him to sell them for her, and pay her the money, charging him not to make me acquainted with it. He sold the whole parcel to one Paris, a jeweller, for the sum of twenty-eight thousand French livres (francs). Two stones, part of the festoons, were exchanged by me for two pendulum clocks at one Furet's, in the Rue St. Honoré, with twenty-five louis-d'or in addition. One diamond, in like manner from the festoons, was set in a ring by Regnier, my jeweller. I had a chain in small brilliants which Franks the Jew had sold me ; that I gave to Regnier, adding a few small diamonds which belonged to the knots of the tassels, the whole of which he made into a chain, which the cardinal's counsel valued at forty thousand livres. I with much difficulty parted with it for *sixty pounds sterling* in London. It was nearly the same with every particular ; they were, in order to obtain their ends, obliged to multiply the price for which every article sold in a like proportion ; and thus, from this false estimation, endeavour to prove that the *whole* of the Necklace had been in my possession.

“I had now left in all sixteen diamonds which I had brought back from London, four-and-twenty very small ones, which were on the sides of each oval stone at the bottom of the tassels, twenty-eight encircling the two large oval stones, two small ones on each side of the button, eighteen of the small size, six of which held the two oval stones between the festoon, and the twelve others which were immediately adjoining to the ribbon at top. The rose and what held the tassels were not yet taken to pieces. I delivered the whole to Regnier, out of all which he selected the best diamonds, and nearly of an equality, to encircle the top of a bonbonnière and mount a small pair of drop earrings which the countess wanted to make a present of. The remainder I directed him to sell, for which he got thirteen or fourteen thousand livres. These made up the number of what I sold, as well at Paris as at London. Let us now recapitulate.

“I received in ready money in London *five thousand pounds sterling* from Mr. Eliason, and fifty or sixty pounds from Mr. Gray.

“In exchange I received a medallion, a pair of girandole earrings, a ring, a shirt-pin, a hoop, two steel swords, a pair of

steel buckles, one pound of pearl-seed, two rows of pearls forming a necklace, a mount for bracelets, a small parcel of pearls, a neck-button convertible into a ring, a snuff-box, a pair of asparagus tongs, a wine syphon, a lady's pocket-case in satin and gold with its fittings, a miniature, and a pen-case of roses valued at sixty pounds sterling.<sup>1</sup> Some few other small articles I had from Gray's shop, as needles, knives, steel forks, spring-pincers, scissors, a pair of silver buckles, an opera glass, a small steel watch-chain.

"I sold at Paris to M. Paris several diamonds to the amount of twenty-eight thousand livres, and I received nearly fifty louis-d'or for a part of the pearl-seed carried from London by the Chevalier O'Neil. The remainder of the pearl-seed was sold to Mordecai, a Jew residing in the Rue aux Ours.

"I have already said I had delivered to Gray twenty-two stones to set in a necklace, and twenty-six<sup>2</sup> for drop earrings. I had acquainted him with the day of my departure, and he had promised the work should be completed; yet the day previous thereto he showed me all the pieces, only sketched, assuring me there was a great deal more work than he had at first imagined, and that if I would leave them with him he had an opportunity of conveying them to Paris within a fortnight. I left him the diamonds with my address, and set out upon my journey on a Sunday morning with the Capuchin McDermott, who attended me as far as Dover. At parting with him I made him a present of a snuff-box with a very handsome painting on the lid, and defrayed his journey back to London.

"When I left Paris I had taken credit for two thousand crowns; I won at Newmarket near a thousand pounds sterling: out of both which sums I expended a hundred guineas in saddlery, harness, and race-horse body-cloths, a hundred guineas more for a phaeton, a hundred and fifty guineas in English stuffs and clothes for myself and servants; the rest was spent in travelling, and during my six weeks' stay in London, which will not appear extraordinary when it is known I had taken up my residence at one of the principal hotels in that town, that I kept two servants, a hired coach, and

<sup>1</sup> There is evidently some blunder here. This must be the aigrette in the form of a rose, for which Gray charged £60. See *post*, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, p. 147. The Count there says twenty-eight.

two saddle horses, that I often gave entertainments, and that keeping the most fashionable company, I was obliged to play and enter into expensive pleasures.

"All I now had left of the famous Necklace were two rings—one for myself, the other belonging to the countess—a small diamond mounted on a plum-coloured stone, a pair of drop earrings, and a circle on a black tortoiseshell-box, and what I had left with Gray—namely, the necklace of twenty-two stones and the earrings.

"Thus I have given a minute detail of the diamonds I possessed and of the manner in which I had disposed of them.

"From the account I have kept and have just set forth of all the diamonds I had in my possession or that of the countess belonging to the Necklace, and by comparing it with an exact representation thereof engraved on a scale of the size of the diamonds, it appears that the queen had kept *two hundred and fifty-six diamonds* of the same magnitude, *ninety-eight* smaller ones of the same form, and the *two finest diamonds* of the first size. The two hundred and fifty-six diamonds were what composed the most beautiful part of the Necklace, on account of the assemblage and the regularity of so great a number of stones."<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately for the count's reputation for accuracy, a sworn affidavit of Gray's, setting forth a true extract from his ledger, and produced at the time of the trial, gives the following version of his dealings with the count. This not only shows a considerable variation of price in respect to several articles received in exchange, but yields in round numbers a total of nearly three thousand pounds in excess of the amount admitted by the count to have been received:—

*Monsieur le Comte de Valois, of London,*

DR. to ROBERT GRAY.

*May 20th, 1785.*

				£	s.	d.	
A medallion set with diamonds	...	...	...	230	0	0	Prices quoted by Count de la Motte.
A diamond ring	...	...	...	94	10	0	
A pearl knot for a lady	...	...	...	52	10	0	

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte," p. 194, *et seq.*



	£	s.	d.	
A hand fire-screen ... ..	1	4	0	Prices quoted by Count de la Motte.
A funnel and glass ... ..	0	6	0	
A purse ... ..	4	14	6	
A handsome steel sword ... ..	100	0	0	
Ditto ditto ... ..	45	0	0	
Two toothpick-cases ... ..	12	12	0	
A carving-knife and fork ... ..	1	4	0	
A pair of blue steel buckles ... ..	0	18	0	
2000 needles ... ..	1	10	0	
A strong casket ... ..	5	5	0	
A diamond hoop ring ... ..	13	13	0	300 0 0
Four razors ... ..	1	0	0	
Setting a diamond ring ... ..	1	8	0	
A ring-case ... ..	0	8	0	
A silk pocket-case, with fittings complete ... ..	12	12	0	
A corkscrew ... ..	0	12	0	
A handsome star-shaped diamond brooch ... ..	400	0	0	
A pair of asparagus tongs ... ..	2	12	6	
A gold watch ... ..	38	0	0	
A purse ... ..	4	14	6	
A cord for a cane ... ..	1	1	0	200 0 0 120 0 0 60 0 0
A pair of scales for diamonds ... ..	1	1	0	
A wine syphon ... ..	5	5	0	
A pair of spring pincers ... ..	0	10	6	
A pearl necklace ... ..	170	0	0	
1800 pearls ... ..	270	0	0	
A diamond aigrette in the form of a rose ... ..	60	0	0	
A pair of steel buckles ... ..	18	18	0	
A watch-chain ... ..	6	16	6	
A handsome pair of diamond girandole earrings ... ..	600	0	0	
A brilliant ring ... ..	100	0	0	500 0 0 200 0 0 140 0 0
A diamond snuff-box ... ..	120	0	0	
A diamond shirt-button ... ..	28	0	0	
A pair of buckles ... ..	7	7	0	
Ditto ditto ... ..	3	13	6	
A parcel of pearl-seed and other pearls, for embroidery ... ..	1890	0	0	
Paid in cash ... ..	6090	0	0	
Total ... ..	£10,371	6	0	
Credit by value received in various diamonds	£10,371	6	0 <sup>r</sup>	

While the count was away leading a life of ease and pleasure—bargaining, it is true, about diamonds to-day, but “betting at Newmarket” on the morrow, riding about town in his “hired coach” or on his “saddle horse,” with his groom behind, giving “occasional entertainments at the principal hotels,” “keeping the most fashionable company,” “playing deeply,” and “entering into the most expensive pleasures,”—while all this was going on, madame the countess was putting off troublesome inquiries respecting her husband’s whereabouts as best she could, saying one day that he was in Berry looking after a legacy, at another time that he was in Poitou, and finally that he was in England, where he had won £1000 on a horse-race.<sup>1</sup> Still she managed to enjoy herself after her own fashion. Cardinal Prince de Rohan reluctantly admitted that she visited him at the episcopal palace at Saverne at the end of May, dressed in man’s clothes, and moreover, that he had sent one of the episcopal carriages to fetch her.<sup>2</sup> One can fancy the high jinks between the countess and Cagliostro, and black-sheep Baron de Planta, and the Prince de Rohan, and “*la petite comtesse*,” as Cagliostro’s wife was called, over the cardinal’s matchless Tokay on this notable occasion.

<sup>1</sup> “Confrontation du Cardinal de Rohan avec le Père Loth.”

<sup>2</sup> “Premier Interrogatoire du Cardinal de Rohan.”

## XXI.

1785. JUNE 22—AUG. 6.

## THE GATHERING OF THE STORM.

ON the 22nd of June, Count de la Motte finds himself in Paris again, with a letter of credit for the sum of 122,896 livres in his pocket-book on Perregaux the banker—the same shrewd Perregaux who, according to the popular story, after refusing the services of young Jacques Lafitte, engaged him the instant afterwards from observing him pick up and carefully preserve a common pin as in dejected mood he crossed the courtyard of the banker's hôtel, and who subsequently took him into partnership and gave him his daughter in marriage, and so enabled him to found the great house of Lafitte and Co., of which he was so many years the distinguished head.

The count turns his letter of credit into hard cash on the following day,<sup>1</sup> and then calls upon Regnier with some of the stones he had failed to get rid of in England, commissions him to mount the best of them round the lid of a circular box (*a bonbonnière*), to set others for a small pair of drop earrings which the countess intends making a present of,<sup>2</sup> and sells him the remainder—namely, twenty brilliants, weighing in the aggregate forty-two carats, one weighing four and a quarter carats, and thirty-nine weighing fifty-nine and a half carats—for 27,000 livres, discharging at the same time Regnier's claim for setting the two diamond rings for himself and madame, and also an old debt due for either jewellery or plate.<sup>3</sup>

The De la Mottes now make no secret of the affluence which, after years of watching and waiting, is theirs at last. Madame, they confidentially admit, is in high favour with the queen, who, they insinuate, showers gifts upon her confidant with no niggard

<sup>1</sup> Déposition de Perregaux.<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, p. 148.<sup>3</sup> Déposition de Pagnier.



hand. The countess's ambition was to be lady of the manor of Fontette. She has the means of gratifying it now ; nevertheless, it is not to Fontette that she goes, but to Bar-sur-Aube, which, with its somewhat free and pleasant society, has greater charms for her. On retirement for a time to Bar-sur-Aube, her heart is fixed. She and the count had been long looking forward to spending the present autumn in their new abode, which by the aid of the Parisian decorator, who for months past had been exercising his talents upon the principal apartments, was rapidly becoming a model of elegance and taste.

One little thing, however, was somewhat troubling the De la Mottes at this moment and casting its shadow across their anticipated enjoyment—namely, the affair of the Necklace, the first instalment in respect of which would soon be falling due. Still the countess, having accomplished what she had, would surely find it no very difficult task to arrange a postponement which would leave her husband and herself at liberty to enjoy their autumn holiday in peace and quietude. It is with this view that the countess calls upon the cardinal, as we have already stated, while the count, looking upon the affair as good as settled, hies down to Bar-sur-Aube to await the arrival of several waggon-loads of furniture which were on their way from Paris. Among these we may be certain there were some handsome suites of the very latest fashion, supplied, we know, by Héricourt, Fournier, and Gervais, the crack upholsterers of the period, at the cost of 50,000 livres. There was no lack of clocks too from Furet, of marble groups from Adams and Chevalier, nor of mirrors, and chandeliers, and table-glass, and Wedgwood ware, then getting into fashion in Paris, from Sikes.<sup>1</sup> A little automaton bird too, that flew about the room all alone, and for which madame had given 1500 livres,<sup>2</sup> would certainly not be forgotten.

It must have been at this particular juncture that the cardinal chanced to see some two or three letters actually written by Marie-Antoinette, and that, struck by the dissimilarity of the handwriting of these letters and those received from Madame de

<sup>1</sup> "Marie-Antoinette et le Procès du Collier," par E. Campardon. Paris, 1858, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoire pour le Cardinal de Rohan," p. 49.

la Motte, he communicated his doubts upon the subject to the countess.<sup>1</sup> She, with her active brain and ever ready tongue, had of course a hundred reasons to prove to the credulous cardinal that he was mistaken, and so set his mind at rest. Not so as regarded her own; she felt none of that confidence with which she could so readily inspire her dupe. She feared the mine was on the point of being sprung, and that the explosion would take place before she could make good her retreat. To reassure alike the cardinal and the jewellers she goes with her casket of jewels,—which Regnier tells her are worth 100,000 livres to her notary, one Mainguet, with whom she pawns them for a loan of 35,000 livres, 30,000 of which she takes to the Prince de Rohan to give to Böhmer and Bassenge. Then she packs off Rétaux de Villette post-haste to Bar-sur-Aube, and so much is she taken up with these urgent matters that she neither dines nor sups nor sleeps at home on that day.<sup>2</sup>

One can imagine the consternation of the Count de la Motte as, while superintending the arrangement of the new furniture and chatting with the decorator respecting the extremely satisfactory effect of the *tout ensemble* of madame's boudoir, he catches sight of Villette driving up to the house in hot haste, and looking far more grave than is the fellow's wont. The count rushes down the steps to meet him—they turn aside for a few minutes' conversation, and after a hurried lunch, and some hasty instructions to the work-people, the order is given to put fresh horses to the carriage, and the pair are soon rattling over the road to Paris. By dint of handsome "*pourboires*" to postillions, and considerable wear and tear of horseflesh, the hundred and forty miles that intervene between them and the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles are got over in less than the four-and-twenty hours. At noon on the following day (August 3) a council is held, at which it is decided that madame shall send a message to Bassenge, requesting him to favour her with a call. The jeweller, in the belief that the summons can only refer to the Necklace, takes the Hôtel de Strasbourg in his way, sees the cardinal, speaks to him of his own and his partner's in-

<sup>1</sup> "Premier Interrogatoire du Cardinal de Rohan."

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoire pour le Cardinal de Rohan," p. 72.

quietude at the queen having taken no notice whatever of the firm's letter of July 12, and informs him of the message he has received from Madame de la Motte, to whom he now hastens. Bassenge finds the countess alone, with no other furniture in the apartment beyond a bedstead and a couch, and everything about the house betokening a sudden "flitting." The jeweller simply thought he was dreaming when, after the ordinary compliments had passed between them, madame, with the calmest of countenances and the firmest of voices, said to him: "I have sent for you to let you know that you have been deceived—the word '*approuvé*' and the signature attached to the paper containing the conditions of sale of the Necklace are forgeries—the queen's handwriting has been counterfeited. As for the rest, the cardinal, you know, is very rich; you had better look to him, and insist upon his rendering himself personally liable."<sup>1</sup>

Bassenge, as soon as he recovered his self-possession, hurried home to communicate to his partner the astounding intelligence he had just received, but Böhmer, it will be remembered, was at Crespy with Madame Campan on this very day.<sup>2</sup> The jeweller therefore resolved to look in again on the cardinal, and ask an explanation from him. The Prince de Rohan, on being apprised of what the countess had said, shared in the fears of the jeweller, though he dared not avow as much. He hesitated for some time ere he made a reply; then he strove to reassure Bassenge by affirming that he had in his own possession a written agreement of the queen's, and he bade the jeweller go home and make himself perfectly easy; and home, and somewhat easier in his mind, Bassenge went. Great stress was laid at the trial on this mis-statement of the cardinal's, still we can very well understand it to have been nothing more than an exaggeration of the fact that he was in possession of letters which he believed to be written by the queen, authorising the purchase of the Necklace on her behalf.

When Böhmer returns home from Crespy on the following day, the two partners compare notes, and decide that the queen ought to be seen without a moment's delay. To Versailles, therefore, Böhmer hastens, but, as we have already stated, is refused an

<sup>1</sup> Déposition de Bassenge.

<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, p. 135.



audience by Marie-Antoinette. A day or two afterwards, however, he finds himself summoned by courier to wait upon the queen, who has by this time learnt from Madame Campan the result of her conversation at Crespy with the crown jeweller, and is anxious to hear the astounding recital from his own lips. Böhmer, disregarding all that Madame Campan has told him, and in the full belief that the cardinal holds the queen's written agreement for the purchase of the Necklace, proceeds to Versailles in all confidence, determined to be no longer trifled with, even by royalty itself. On his arrival he is ushered into the queen's private cabinet, when Marie-Antoinette at once inquires of him: "By what fatality it is that she is still doomed to hear of his foolish pretensions about selling her an article which she had steadily refused for several years?" Böhmer, reassured by what the cardinal had told Bassege, no longer felt any doubt as to the queen being really a party to the purchase of the Necklace, and replied, "that he was compelled, being unable to pacify his creditors any longer." "What are your creditors to me?" inquired the queen. Böhmer then related to her *seriatim* all that, according to his deluded imagination, had passed between them through the intervention of the Cardinal de Rohan. She was equally thunderstruck, incensed, and surprised at everything she heard. In vain did she speak; the jeweller, alike importunate and dangerous, repeated incessantly: "Madame, this is no time for feigning; deign to confess that you have my Necklace, and order me some assistance, or else a bankruptcy will soon bring the whole affair to light."<sup>1</sup>

Marie-Antoinette, driven almost frantic by this flagrant imposture and by the wanton manner in which her name had been abused and trifled with, immediately sent for the Abbé de Vermond, "her pri-

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. pp. 283-4. Madame Campan is the single authority for this reputed interview between Böhmer and the queen. Other accounts agree in stating that the queen invariably refused to see the crown jeweller, under the pretence that his threats of suicide alarmed her. Still, as Madame Campan was so intimately mixed up with the affair at this particular juncture, she could hardly be mistaken on so important a point as this interview. If it really did take place, Böhmer must have kept the cardinal in ignorance of it, for had he known of it he would hardly have counselled the jeweller to attempt to throw dust in the eyes of the astute De Breteuil. See the next page.

vate secretary, her confidant, and her counsellor ;”<sup>1</sup> and subsequently for the Baron de Breteuil—the cardinal’s two bitterest enemies. Delighted at the prospect they saw of crushing the grand almoner, not merely by effecting his utter ruin at court, but by disgracing him in the eyes of all Europe, they never for a moment thought of the consequences of permitting the name of the second personage in the kingdom to be mixed up in a swindling transaction and associated with those of a profligate ecclesiastic, a wholesale forger, a Palais Royal courtesan, a sharper, and an abandoned woman and thief.

Hardly had Böhmer made his partner acquainted with what transpired at his interview with the queen, ere another courier in the royal livery dashes up to the door of the jewellers’ establishment—“Au Grand Balcon,” in the Rue Vendôme—this time with a letter from the Baron de Breteuil, minister of justice and of the king’s household, and the Prince de Rohan’s declared enemy, again requiring Böhmer’s attendance at Versailles. On the receipt of this new summons, Böhmer hurries off to the cardinal for instructions and finds his eminence by this time pretty well crazed with this same Necklace business. Nevertheless he enjoins the jeweller not to breathe a word about the queen, for should the minister discover that her majesty had purchased the detested jewel, he would certainly inform the king, and they would all be involved in one common disgrace. Should the Baron de Breteuil question him as to the meaning of the letter which the firm had sent to the queen, he had better reply that it referred to some new set of diamonds which they desired to sell to her majesty.

Primed with these equivocal instructions, the crown jeweller proceeds nervously to his interview with the minister ; but whether he was as reticent as the cardinal bade him be on the subject of the sale of the Necklace we have our doubts. Böhmer’s object was to get his money ; but then he dared not fly in face of the instructions he received from the minister. He therefore played fast and loose with the cardinal, not daring to break with him for fear he should lose his 1,400,000 livres, but betraying him, so far as he thought he might safely venture to do, to his acknow-

<sup>1</sup> “Memoirs of Marie Antoinette,” by Madame Campan, vol. ii. pp. 284.

ledged enemy. The result was that a few days afterwards, on the recommendation of the Baron de Breteuil, who assured the jewellers that they should be paid for the Necklace, a memorial was drawn up and forwarded to the queen by the crown jewellers, wherein was set forth a complete history of the negotiations which had been entered into with the cardinal, and which had resulted in the sale to him of the Necklace, as they believed, on her majesty's account.

At this point the arch *intrigante* seems to have lost her head, for on the morning of the 4th, the day after she had made her damaging admission to Bassenge respecting the signature to the contract, she sends her maid to the Hôtel de Strasbourg to beg the cardinal to call upon her. He does so, when she receives him seemingly all in tears, and tells him that she is a victim to the malevolence of the courtiers of Versailles, who are jealous of the favour shown her by the queen; that she is obliged to fly to avoid their attacks, and entreats of him to afford her an asylum until she can provide herself with some safe retreat. The stupid cardinal, not even yet convinced that he has been duped, or, if so, fearing to admit as much, hesitates at first, but eventually consents to receive her, her husband, and her maid at his hôtel.<sup>1</sup> The countess afterwards pretended that it was the cardinal who sent for her and the count; that he kept them almost prisoners, and used every argument to induce them to cross the frontier into Germany with all speed, so as to be out of the way when the storm burst forth. She even went so far as to say that the count was obliged to threaten to use force ere he could get released.<sup>2</sup>

Only one motive can be suggested for the countess taking refuge at the Palais-Cardinal. She knew, or she suspected, that the police were watching her house and tracking her footsteps, and she did not know how soon the outstretched hand of justice might be upraised to strike, and she may have thought from the cardinal's high position, and the power and influence of his friends and connections, that the police would not dare to violate the sanctity of the episcopal domicile. For two entire days the De la Mottes remained in close seclusion at the Hôtel de Strasbourg, when

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire pour le Cardinal de Rohan," p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 375, *et seq.*, and "Premier Interrogatoire de Madame de la Motte."



finding the confinement irksome, or thinking possibly that the affair would be certain to be hushed up, or that the law if put in force would not trouble itself about a couple of fugitives hidden in some far-away country town in the Champagne, they left the cardinal's on the evening of the 5th of August for their own house in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles.

Arrived there the De la Mottes without a moment's loss of time appear to have made arrangements for sending the forger Villette out of the way. Madame, calling him aside, confides to him what he is already well aware of, namely, that her affairs are somewhat embarrassed, and that she and the count propose retiring to Bar-sur-Aube until the storm has blown over and the atmosphere is a trifle clearer. Placing 4000 livres in bank-notes in her faithful secretary's hand, "Go you," said she, "to Italy for a time;" and then to console the lover, whom hard necessity forced her to abandon, she added, "I will soon recall you near me again." The docile Villette promised to do as he was bid. A cabriolet seems to have been in waiting for him in the court-yard of the countess's house, and into it Villette got, and a little after two o'clock in the morning he was presumed to be on his way to self-exile.<sup>1</sup>

The following morning, while the count was giving some directions respecting the last van-load of furniture, which was then being packed in the court-yard of the hôtel, Bassenge looked in, and in answer to his inquiries after madame's health was informed by the count that she had been at Versailles for the last three days pleading for the cardinal. De la Motte added that he had only returned from Bar-sur-Aube three days before, when he heard about the Necklace business for the first time. "If," remarked he in a jocular way, "the queen should ask you the meaning of the letter of thanks which I hear you have addressed to her, why not say it merely meant that the Necklace had always been at her disposition, and that it was only a renewal of the offers of it which had been previously made?"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire pour le Cardinal de Rohan," p. 83. Villette evidently lingered for some time on French soil, for his passport for Italy was not dated until August 20, two days after the countess's arrest.

<sup>2</sup> Déposition de Bassenge.

No sooner had the count seen the last van-load of furniture safely off than he went with Father Loth to Mainguet the notary, paid him his 35,000 livres, and took away the jewels which madame had deposited with him a few days previously.<sup>1</sup> These were necessary to the coming display which the De la Mottes were bent upon making at Bar-sur-Aube. Determined to lose no further time, the count and countess set out the same evening for their country retreat; and it is said that at the moment the countess stepped into the carriage she consoled the cardinal by promising to return the very instant he should have need of her.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Déposition du Père Loth.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoire Historique des Intrigues de la Cour," etc., par Rétaux de Villette, p. 59.

## XXII.

1785. AUGUST 8-17.

## TWELVE DAYS' STATE AT BAR-SUR-AUBE.

THE countess had informed Beugnot, who had called upon her a short time previously to inquire if she had any commands for Bar-sur-Aube, whither he was about returning to spend his holidays, that it would not be until the commencement of October that she would again have the pleasure of seeing him. "I was therefore very much surprised," observes he, "to see Madame de la Motte arrive at Bar-sur-Aube in the early part of August, bringing with her her entire establishment, husband included. Villette alone remained in Paris as a forlorn sentinel, and, what appeared most strange, every day there arrived waggons loaded with furniture—a far larger quantity in fact than the house would hold—and magnificent furniture too. There were numerous handsome mirrors and looking-glasses with which the walls of the *salon*, already resplendent with a profusion of gilding, were decorated; the chairs and couches, covered with beautiful tapestry, were also gilt.<sup>1</sup> Furet's clocks, and Adams and Chevalier's marble groups and bronzes ornamented the mantelpieces, and scattered about the *salon* were some of those costly fancies with which the arts contrive to tempt the extremest opulence, such as a pair of automatic canaries that sang a duet together, and another automaton bird, which flew about the room of itself. There were likewise two gold musical boxes—things which have become common enough since, but were still rare at that time; and clocks which by means of certain mechanical arrangements displayed different scenes every

<sup>1</sup> "Some of the De la Mottes' fine furniture may still be seen at Bar-sur-Aube, in the *salon* of the son of a former postmaster of the place, who subsequently bought the house itself of the count. To-day, improvements in the town of Bar-sur-Aube have necessitated the partial destruction of the De la Motte abode, fragments of which exist in no less than three separate streets."—*Letter from the Curé of Bar-sur-Aube to the author*, 1866.



hour they struck. On seeing these things, one divined that they could only have been bought by people tired of their money and anxious for the first opportunity of flinging it out of window. In the dining-room were two magnificent buffets on which were displayed a profusion of valuable porcelain and two complete services of silver plate."<sup>1</sup> The hangings of the countess's bed were of crimson velvet trimmed with gold lace and fringe and embroidered with gold and spangles, while the counterpane was worked all over with pearls<sup>2</sup> brought, it will be remembered, by the count from England, and for which Gray had charged him over two thousand two hundred pounds, and which, according to the countess, were reported in the neighbourhood to be of the value of one hundred and fifty thousand livres. "As a consummation of imprudence," remarks Beugnot, "the De la Mottes exhibited a casket containing more than two hundred thousand livres worth of diamonds, the count himself being supplied with a far larger quantity than seemed proper for an honest man."

"In the De la Mottes' stables were twelve splendid horses, and in their coach-house no fewer than five or six handsome carriages, made in England," says Beugnot, "with a care and intelligence which showed that expense was the last thing these people troubled themselves about." Among these vehicles was a light and beautiful cabriolet in the form of a balloon, and upwards of ten feet high. In this singular vehicle the Count de la Motte used to drive about the neighbourhood, stared at by the gaping peasants and townspeople.<sup>3</sup> The countess when paying visits of ceremony rode in a carriage drawn by six horses with little silver bells jingling at their collars and foxes' brushes flopping at their ears. She was invariably preceded by a couple of outriders, and one day greatly astonished the Abbot of Clairvaux—who, though a little king in these parts, only sported four horses himself—by driving up to the

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. pp. 70, 71.

<sup>2</sup> "Authentic Adventures of the Countess de la Motte," p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 120. The author of this work states that he was at Bar-sur-Aube at this particular period, and saw the count riding about in the balloon-shaped carriage above mentioned. Balloons, it should be remembered, were then a recent invention, Montgolfier having made his first ascent in December, 1783, some twenty months previously.

abbey gateway in this unwonted state. The number of servants on the De la Motte establishment was considerable, and their liveries were as a matter of course extremely rich. Among them was one of those little negro pages called "jokeis," then much in fashion, engaged for madame's special service. In short, the count and countess at this period of their career displayed in all their appointments a magnificence and a profusion more than rivalling that of the wealthiest families in France.

Madame's superb embroidered robes and her valuable point lace were only in keeping with the splendour of her household display. As for her jewels, she no longer depended on a pair of diamond bracelets to attract attention, for had she not now the magnificent pair of girandole earrings for which Gray the jeweller had charged the count six hundred pounds sterling, and the diamond star-shaped brooch which had cost another four hundred pounds, and one of the handsomest diamonds in the whole Necklace set as a ring by Regnier, besides other diamond rings innumerable? The necklace, formed of "twenty-two of the very finest diamonds from the festoons," which Gray had mounted in accordance with the count's instructions, was flashing at this moment in the jeweller's shop window, 13, New Bond Street, dazzling the eyes of Piccadilly and Bond Street loungers, and exciting the envy of high-born English beauties; for Gray, hard man that he was, would not part with the handsome jewel to the Capuchin McDermott—whom the count had commissioned to procure it, and who had made application for it to Gray on the count's behalf—until he had been paid the expense of setting.

"We used to think," remarks Beugnot, "that the Cardinal de Rohan paid for all this brilliant extravagance, and we admired the good use which his eminence made of the funds of the grand almonry. The first representation we had witnessed of the magnificence of the De la Motte household had astonished us; at this fresh display we felt uneasy and well nigh indignant. Neither husband nor wife showed the least inquietude. Their dinners were excellent; and fête followed upon fête. They endeavoured to attract the neighbourhood to their house and get invited out in return, and to a certain extent they succeeded."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. p. 71.

Within about ten miles or so of Bar-sur-Aube is Brienne, famous for its military school, where the young Bonaparte it will be remembered studied mathematics and the art of war ; and where, in the neighbouring château, lived Louis Lomenie de Brienne, last Count of Brienne, who was brother of the Archbishop of Sens, prime minister of France just before the outbreak of the Revolution, and himself war minister for a time under Louis XVI. The ends of both brothers were alike untimely. One, the archbishop, died from a midnight carouse in which he was forced to join by the Jacobin emissaries who came to carry him off from his palace at Sens to the guillotine ; the other by the guillotine itself, going thither in the same set of tumbrils as Madame Elisabeth, the king's sister. At the Château de Brienne—a splendid edifice built by the count with the large fortune he received with his wife, the daughter of a rich *fermier-général*—as at almost every other château of importance at this period, private theatricals appear to have been in vogue.

“M. de la Motte one day mentioned to me,” remarks Beugnot, “that he had received an invitation to one of these entertainments at the Château de Brienne, and would be pleased if I would accompany him and accept of a seat in his carriage. Being well known to M. de Brienne, I acceded to the count's request without hesitation, and on the appointed day we set forth in a gorgeous equipage drawn by four splendidly-caparisoned horses, and with three footmen behind us. Prior to our starting I felt strongly inclined to recede, as I foresaw that I should have to undergo my share of ridicule for this ostentatious display. On our arrival at the château we alighted to the great scandal of those who saw us arrive. Happily for us the preparations for the play absorbed almost everybody's attention, and among others that of the master and mistress of the house. We entered the *salon* so that we might be seen, and passed from thence into the *salle de spectacle*. I was seated by the side of M. de la Motte, and soon perceived that he was the object of malevolent glances, which were passed from hand to hand with shruggings of shoulders and mocking smiles. He certainly furnished a good subject for them, for he was dressed in a most singular style, and, what was in the worst of taste, diamonds were displayed in every part of his toilette at a period when the greatest simplicity already reigned in male attire.”



One can picture the count with one side of his three-cornered hat looped up with the magnificent diamond aigrette which he had bought of Gray, and with the medallion set with diamonds for which he had given two hundred and thirty pounds attached to a ribbon round his neck; with his diamond watch-chain, his various diamond rings, and his diamond snuff-box, value one hundred and twenty pounds; and with one or other of the very handsome steel swords which he had brought over with him from England swinging at his side.

"The count wore a dress coat of sky-blue cloth, a white waistcoat embroidered all over, and breeches of canary-colour taffeta. Still this only indicated the somewhat antiquated elegant; but here is what completed the absurdity. Madame de la Motte had taken it into her head to have the left facing of her husband's coat embroidered over with a fine bouquet of lilies and roses intermixed. Nothing of the kind had been worn by any one up to that time, and most certainly not since. Everybody was asking what it could possibly mean: there were some who professed to see in it a sort of parody upon the united escutcheons of monsieur and madame, one of which contained *fleurs-de-lis*, the other roses. Stupidity and self-conceit could hardly have gone further.

"When the play was over we returned to the *salon*. The assembly was composed of the distinguished families of the neighbourhood and of men of letters from Paris—of the Abbé Morellet, la Harpe, Masson de Morvilliers, &c. I saluted Madame de Brienne, who scarcely condescended to nod to me in return, and then turned her back upon me. My reception by the master of the house was reduced to a "Good evening, sir," uttered in a dry tone. One feels ill at ease in the midst of a numerous circle after having been coldly received by the host and hostess. I continued standing, not knowing whither to bend my steps in the midst of this hostile camp, when my good star brought to the *salon* the Count de Dampierre, a great bore, who relieved me of my difficulty by at once seizing hold of me. He profited by the opportunity to speak to me of innovations of every kind which were already fermenting in his brain; and under the circumstances it was quite a treat to me to listen to him. In order that we might not be separated during supper, he dragged me at once to table, and

seated me by his side, when he offered me in his own person the example of an individual capable of speaking with warmth and eating with avidity at one and the same moment. I was occasionally a trifle inattentive, owing to my desire to observe how my travelling-companion was faring ; but M. de Dampierre always brought me back to the subject of his discourse. 'Never mind him,' he would say, 'he's only some poor devil of a swell at whose expense people have been amusing themselves for the last two hours. Do you know him ?'

" 'Yes, a little.'

" 'Well, what is he ? Is he one of us ? Does he know where we are ?'

" 'Not the least in the world.'

" 'Well, then, let them do what they please with him ;' and M. de Dampierre forthwith resumed his dissertation.

"I only knew from the tales told by some of the guests of the tricks which had been played upon M. de la Motte at the supper-table. It seems that in spite of the splendid repast spread before his eyes he had been debarred from partaking of the slightest nourishment, and that he rose from the table as badly ballasted as Sancho Panza at the conclusion of the first feast served to him under his own government. This could only have been brought about by a concert of 'good turns,' the success of which enraptured the originators who came to relate the affair to us. The Count de Dampierre inveighed against this interruption :

" 'Ah ! well, well ! but leave us alone ; we have neither diamonds nor canary-coloured breeches, nor bouquets embroidered at our button-holes. There is your man cowering in the chimney-corner : go and laugh at his expense, since he is in the humour to submit to it, and permit us to talk sense !'

"After a time M. de la Motte grew bold, and came to me to propose that we should leave. I consented with all my heart ; but there still remained a dreg at the bottom of the cup for me to swallow.

"When I went in all humility to salute M. de Brienne, and to ask him almost tremblingly if he had any commands to give me for Bar-sur-Aube, he signalled to me to advance, so that in getting clear of the hands of M. de Dampierre I fell into those of M. de

Brienne, who was quite M. de Dampierre's equal in holding fast to a good listener. M. de Brienne had not been at table, and had had of course nothing to do with the practical jokes of which M. de la Motte had been the victim. Indeed, he had listened with suppressed anger to the account which had been given him of the tricks played off upon the count, still he did not approve of my having presented myself at his house in such company. I excused myself as well as I could, assuring him M. de la Motte had informed me that he was invited for that particular day. M. de Brienne proved to me that whether M. de la Motte was invited or not, I did very wrong to accompany him. I agreed with him, and asked his pardon, as the shortest way of terminating the discussion, whereupon he immediately opened a conversation upon another subject. There were scarcely any affairs in the commune in which M. de Brienne did not take a lively interest, and he did me the honour to consult me upon many of them, consequently there were plenty of materials for a lengthened conversation.

"Poor M. de la Motte remained at a distance, watching our gestures, and awaiting the moment when I should be at liberty. During all this time people passed and repassed him with expressions of contempt or pity. I did not dare utter his name, though I had observed he had been waiting for me fully an hour. I risked a first salute to M. de Brienne, as if about to take my leave, but he paid no attention whatever to it, and continued speaking. A few minutes afterwards I made a new attempt to release myself, whereupon my host proposed to me to sleep at Brienne. As our discussion continued I could see that my travelling-companion was on live coals. At last, by a courageous effort, I succeeded in disengaging myself, and left with M. de la Motte. We stepped into his magnificent carriage, having behind us two footmen with lighted torches, and a negro covered from head to foot with silver lace. The windows of the *salon* looked out upon the court of honour of the château; Madame de Brienne and every one present were at the windows to observe the magnificence of our departure, and saluted us by clapping their hands, laughing, and indulging in mocking remarks which distinctly reached our ears. The carriage only rolled on the faster."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. p. 71, *et seq.*



A day or two afterwards Madame de la Motte proposed to Beugnot to accompany her on a visit she was about to pay to the Duke de Penthièvre, but Beugnot, not wishing to place himself in a ridiculous position a second time, very decidedly declined the honour. He however accepted the countess's offer to set him down at Clairvaux, where he had been invited, and which was on the road from Bar-sur-Aube to Château-Villain, and to call and fetch him on her return in the evening.

"In accordance with this arrangement," says Beugnot, "we left Bar-sur-Aube at eight o'clock in the morning of the 17th of August, 1785, a day I shall never forget. Madame de la Motte having set me down at Clairvaux, as had been agreed, went on to Château-Villain, where she dined and met with a reception which astonished those who composed the Penthièvre court. The duke himself reconducted the countess at her departure to the door of the *salon* opening on to the grand staircase, an honour which he did not pay even to duchesses, but reserved exclusively for princesses of the blood-royal, so strongly were the lessons of Madame de Maintenon on the honours to be paid to illegitimacy impressed upon his mind."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. pp. 76-77.

## XXIII.

1785. AUGUST 15-23.

LETTRES-DE-CACHET IN THE ŒIL-DE-BŒUF—IN THE RUE SAINT-CLAUDE  
—AND AT BAR-SUR-AUBE.

AT noon on the 15th of August, 1785, on the festival of the Assumption, and the fête-day of Marie-Antoinette, the Cardinal de Rohan, attired in his sacerdotal robes, was waiting in the Salle de l'Œil-de-Bœuf the arrival of the king and queen, before whom he was about to celebrate high mass in the chapel of the Château of Versailles. Conspicuous among the cardinal's vestments was his gorgeously-embroidered alb—worn by him only upon grand occasions, and valued at upwards of one hundred thousand livres, with his arms and device, in the form of medallions, crowning the larger and more brilliant flowers of which the rich and elaborate design was composed.<sup>1</sup> The handsome Salle de l'Œil-de-Bœuf, which takes its name from the two bull's-eye windows level with the ceiling, was thronged, according to custom, with noblemen of every degree of rank, grand court ladies, great officers of State, soldiers and dignitaries of the Church, all watching for the doors communicating with the royal apartments to be thrown open, and for the king and queen to make their appearance. As it was in the days of the Grand Monarque—as it was in Louis XVI.'s time—as it was on that eventful morning of October 7, 1789, when the château was stormed and the terror-stricken Marie-Antoinette fled across it for life, when the loud cry arose of "Save the queen"—so the Salle de l'Œil-de-Bœuf is now. Round the ceiling, from which hang suspended three magnificent chandeliers of rock-crystal, runs a handsome deep-gilt frieze of cupids, some with hunting-horns, and dogs engaged in the chase; others either reaping or binding sheaves of corn, or snaring birds or playing at see-saw. At the sides of the

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires de la Baronne d'Öberkirche," vol. i. p. 127.

doorway leading into the grand looking-glass gallery, where those not having the *entrée* of the *Œil-de-Bœuf* were accustomed to congregate to see the royal procession pass, are two equestrian portraits, the one of Louis XIV. in the costume of a Roman warrior, wearing, however, his customary full-bottomed wig, with Fame crowning him with a wreath of laurel; the other of the king's brother, the Duke d'Orléans. Facing the same doorway is an elaborate mythological picture representing the Grand Monarque surrounded by his family, all being robed in exceedingly scanty draperies, the wigs of the men forming their principal article of attire, and all having that unpleasant leer in the eyes which the painters of the seventeenth century seemed to have considered peculiarly bewitching, if not quite becoming.

Suddenly the doors are flung open, but, instead of the tall *suisse* shouting out the customary announcement, "*Messieurs, le Roi !*" the Cardinal Prince de Rohan is summoned to attend the king in his private cabinet.

On proceeding thither, the grand almoner found the king and queen together. Louis XVI., without any preliminary observations, thus abruptly addressed him :

"I hear you have purchased some diamonds of Böhmer?"

"Yes, sire," replied the cardinal.

"Pray, what have you done with them?" inquired the king.

"I thought they had been delivered to her majesty."

"Who commissioned you to make the purchase?"

"A lady called the Countess de la Motte-Valois, who handed me a letter from the queen, and I thought I was performing my duty to her majesty when I undertook this negotiation."

"How, sir," exclaimed the queen, "could you believe that I should select you, to whom I have not spoken these eight years, to negotiate anything for me, and especially through the mediation of such a woman—a woman, too, whom I do not even know?"

"I see plainly that I have been cruelly duped," replied the grand almoner, darting upon the queen as he said so a look of indignation and disdain.<sup>1</sup> "I will pay for the Necklace: my desire

<sup>1</sup> See Georgel, who attributed this movement of the cardinal's to his firm belief at the time that the queen had really employed Madame de la Motte as her intermediary in the Necklace affair.



to be of service to your majesty blinded me. I suspected no trick in the affair, and I am sorry for it."

The cardinal then took from his pocket-book a letter purporting to be written by the queen to Madame de la Motte, and intrusting her with the commission. This letter he handed to the king, who after looking at it held it towards the cardinal, saying: "This is neither written nor signed by the queen. How could a prince of the house of Rohan, and a grand almoner of France, ever think that the queen would sign herself *Marie-Antoinette de France*? Everybody knows that queens sign their baptismal names only."

Louis XVI. then produced the copy of a letter sent by the cardinal to Böhmer, and inquired whether he had ever written such a letter. After glancing over it, the grand almoner replied that he had no recollection of having done so; but when the king asked him what he would say if the original letter, signed by himself, were shown to him, the cardinal could not but confess that the letter was genuine.

"'If this be the case,' observed the king, 'explain to me the whole of this enigma. I do not wish to believe you guilty; I had rather you would justify your conduct. Account, therefore, for these manœuvres with Böhmer, these securities, and these notes.'

"In reply to the king's remarks, the grand almoner, who was extremely confused, kept continually repeating: 'I have been deceived, sire. I will pay for the Necklace. I ask pardon of your majesties.' Then turning pale, and leaning against the table, he said: 'Sire, I am too much agitated to answer your majesty in a way——'

"'Compose yourself,' interposed the king, 'and retire into the adjoining closet. You will there find pens, ink, and paper; write down what you have to say to me.'

"The grand almoner retired as directed, and returned in about a quarter of an hour with a written statement of a somewhat incoherent character. After receiving it, Louis XVI. commanded him to withdraw."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. pp. 13, 14, 15, 286-7. Madame Campan has extracted the foregoing narrative, nearly word for word, from a newspaper of the time—the *Journal des Débats*. See the Abbé Soulavie's "Mémoires Historiques et Politiques du

De Besenval says that at this moment the king warned the cardinal he was about to be arrested. "Oh, sire!" exclaimed the prince, "I shall always obey the orders of your majesty, but deign to spare me the shame of being arrested in my pontifical habit before the eyes of the entire court." "It is necessary it should be so," replied the king. The cardinal wished to insist, but the king abruptly quitted him.<sup>1</sup> On leaving the royal cabinet the grand almoner encountered his deadly enemy, the Baron de Breteuil, who had been lying in wait for him, and who at once called out to a sub-lieutenant of his majesty's body-guard, "In the king's name, follow me! Arrest the Cardinal de Rohan!" The officer proceeded to take charge of his prisoner, who, precipitated as it were in a moment from his high pinnacle of fortune, was conducted on foot in his rich pontifical vestments, guarded on all sides, and pressed upon by an amazed crowd of court idlers and hangers-on, to his hôtel looking upon the north wing of the château. The distance he had to go was not great, through the long looking-glass gallery—every eye in the immense throng with which it was lined being turned inquisitively upon him—through a few apartments and down the marble staircase, and across the marble court and the broad "Cour Royale," with the noonday sun shedding its burning rays upon his head, and gilding as it were his gorgeous vestments; past the gaudy, gilded, and over-decorated chapel in which he, Grand Almoner of France, was never more to officiate with a king and queen and a brilliant court appearing to give ear to his ministrations; thence through the iron gate leading into the Rue des Réservoirs, where the Hôtel de Rohan—a singularly plain-looking building, with rather a pretty garden approached from a balustraded terrace in the rear, and easily identified at the present day from the circumstance of its being the residence of the receiver-general of the district—was situated.<sup>2</sup> So soon as the necessary

*règne de Louis XVI.*," vol. vi. p. 81, *et seq.*, where the same account will be found quoted.

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Baron de Besenval," vol. iii. p. 127. The baron adds that he heard the whole of this detail told to the queen, but nothing was said of the contents of the paper written by the cardinal.

<sup>2</sup> It is No. 6 in the Rue des Réservoirs. *Vide* "Histoire Anecdotique des Rues de Versailles," par J. A. Le Roi.

preparations could be made, the cardinal, guarded like a common criminal, was whisked off to Paris to the Hôtel de Strasbourg, from whence he was speedily transferred to the Bastille.

Ere, however, he quitted the palace of Versailles, "notwithstanding the escort that surrounded him, and favoured by the attendant crowd, the grand almoner stopped for a few moments, and stooping down with his face towards the wall, as if to fasten his buckle or his garter, snatched out his pencil and hastily wrote a few words on a scrap of paper placed under his hand in his square red cap. He rose again and proceeded. On entering his hôtel he contrived to slip this paper unperceived into the hand of a confidential 'heyduc' who waited for him at the door of his apartment." The heyduc posts off to Paris, and arrives at the Palais-Cardinal early in the afternoon. His horse falls dead in the stable, and he himself swoons in the apartment of the Abbé Georgel after exclaiming wildly, "All is lost; the prince is arrested." The slip of paper which drops from his hand is caught up and read with eagerness by the abbé, and in accordance with the instructions contained in it, the scarlet portfolio which held all the cardinal's secret correspondence, including the letters—gilt-edged or bordered with *vignettes bleues*—penned by the phantom queen, and on which the Prince de Rohan set such store, is forthwith committed to the flames.<sup>1</sup>

While the foregoing events were transpiring the Count and Countess de la Motte were receiving and returning visits in tranquil security at Bar-sur-Aube. It was two days after the arrest of the cardinal that the countess set out on her visit to the Duke de Penthièvre at Château-Villain, and Beugnot was awaiting her

<sup>1</sup> There are other versions of this incident: we have, however, preferred to follow the Abbé Georgel's. See "*Mémoires pour servir*," etc., vol. ii. pp. 103-4. Madame Campan says that the cardinal borrowed the pencil which he used from the sub-lieutenant into whose custody he was given, and who, when reprimanded for having permitted the cardinal to write, excused himself by saying that the orders he received did not forbid his doing so; and that, moreover, being himself in great pecuniary difficulties, he thought the unaccustomed summons, "In the king's name, follow me," addressed to him by the Baron de Breteuil, concerned him personally, which for the moment so unnerved him that he hardly knew what he was doing. See "*Madame Campan's Memoirs*," vol. ii. pp. 15, 16, 284.



arrival at Clairvaux in the evening. The abbot had pressed the young lawyer to pass three days there if the ensuing fête of Saint-Bernard would not frighten him, and had promised him as a reward that he should hear the famous Abbé Maury from Paris preach the saint's panegyric. "I agreed," says Beugnot, "with all my heart. The day of Saint-Bernard was a grand affair at Clairvaux. The poor who presented themselves at the door of the abbey received charity, and the *bourgeoisie* of Bar-sur-Aube and its environs were entertained at dinner in the refectory, at which the abbot presided. I desired to be present at this banquet to laugh at the abbot, who had spoken to me of this old custom as a piece of tomfoolery he was about to suppress, and had mentioned with contempt the guests who would be present at it.

"The Abbot of Clairvaux was above the middle height, and of a fine and graceful figure. When after his election he had the honour of being presented to the king at Versailles, the queen, struck with his handsome person and the dignity with which he wore the costume of his order, could not refrain exclaiming, 'What a handsome monk!' Dom Rocourt was polite with men and gallant with women, and with all this, or in spite of it, very stupid. I was never able," says Beugnot, "to make him comprehend when the Revolution arrived that the age had done with him, his abbey, and his monks, who would have been only too happy to abandon him."<sup>1</sup> The Abbey of Clairvaux, founded in the year 1114, was one of the richest and most magnificent abbeys in France. Its annual revenue was between three and four hundred thousand francs. Situated in a picturesque glen, the conventual buildings comprised the abbot's residence, a handsome church, said not to have been inferior to Nôtre Dame de Paris, and where several early French kings and princes lay buried, with a treasury for its ornaments and relics, an infirmary, a refectory and dormitories: besides which there were a valuable library and beautiful gardens.<sup>2</sup> Lastly, one must not forget its gigantic wine-vat, which held upwards of 200,000 gallons. To-day the abbey is a house of detention for criminals; the site of its magnificent church—de-

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> "Essais Historiques sur la ville de Bar-sur-Aube," par J. G. F.

molished during the first year of the Restoration—being now a prison-yard. The abbot usually drove out with four horses to his carriage, and had an outrider to precede him. He caused himself to be addressed as “my lord” by his monks and dependents, and by the many persons who had need of his assistance. He governed despotically numerous convents of monks and nuns that were dependent on his abbey, and it is said that he took especial pleasure in visiting the nunneries subject to his sway.<sup>1</sup>

We left Beugnot at Clairvaux waiting Madame de la Motte's return. Soon after eight o'clock she made her appearance, when he at once acquainted her with the engagement he had entered into. She wished to share it and remain for the fête of Saint-Bernard, but the abbot excused himself, explaining to her that the fête was altogether a religious one, and that the ladies who commonly inhabited Clairvaux fled from it on that day, abandoning it to the religious of Saint-Bernard and to their children. They returned, however, on the following day, and the abbot, who was lost in reverence and adoration of Madame de la Motte, pressed her to augment their number. He was no doubt aware of the intimate connection which existed between the countess and the Cardinal de Rohan, and he treated her accordingly like a princess of the church.

A large company was assembled at the abbey on this particular evening in anticipation of meeting the Abbé Maury, whose arrival from Paris was now momentarily expected. The clock having struck nine without the looked-for guest making his appearance, the company sat down to the supper-table. Scarcely had they taken their seats, however, before the sound of carriage-wheels announced some new arrival. This proved to be the Abbé Maury, with “his Jesuitic eyes, his impassive brazen face, image of all the cardinal sins,” who, after being welcomed by his brother ecclesiastic, and introduced to the guests in the supper-room, without being allowed time to change his travelling-dress, took his seat at table, when, as a matter of course, he was at once assailed by the inquiry as to whether there was anything stirring in Paris—in fact, any news.

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoires du Comte Beugnot,” vol. i. pp. 79, 80.

“‘What mean you?—any news?’ replied the Abbé Maury; ‘why, where do you all come from? There is a piece of news which none can understand, which has astonished and bewildered all Paris. The Cardinal de Rohan, Grand Almoner of France, was arrested last Tuesday, the festival of the Assumption, in his pontifical vestments, as he was leaving the king’s cabinet. They talk of a Diamond Necklace which he was to have bought for the queen, but which he did not buy at all. Is it not inconceivable that for such a bauble as this a grand almoner of France should have been arrested in his pontifical vestments—do you understand, in his pontifical vestments?—and on leaving the king’s cabinet?’

“As soon as this intelligence reached my ear,” says Count Beugnot, whose narrative we are quoting, “I glanced at Madame de la Motte, whose napkin had fallen from her hand, and whose pale and rigid face seemed as it were immovably fixed above her plate. After the first shock was over she made an effort and rushed out of the room, followed by one of the chief attendants. In the course of a few minutes I left the table and joined her. The horses were already put to her carriage, so we at once set forth.”

“‘I have perhaps done wrong in leaving so suddenly, above all in the presence of the Abbé Maury,’ remarked Madame de la Motte. ‘Not at all,’ replied I; ‘your relations with the cardinal are known, and almost avowed. He may have to forfeit his life perhaps; your plan is to run away in advance of couriers, letters, or news. You would have done wrong in losing time by supping at Clairvaux—but can you explain this arrest to yourself?’ ‘No,—at least only through some trick of Cagliostro’s: the cardinal is infatuated with him: it is not my fault, I have warned him a hundred times.’ ‘So much the better,’ remarked I; ‘but what is this story about a Necklace which the cardinal has been buying for the queen? How is it that a cardinal is charged with such a purchase? and how comes it about that the queen should choose for such a commission Prince Louis, whom she openly detests?’ ‘I repeat to you, it is all Cagliostro.’ ‘But you have received this charlatan at your house. Are you not compromised in any way with him?’ ‘Absolutely not in the least, and I am perfectly tranquil; I did very wrong to leave the supper-table.’ ‘It was not wrong. If you are tranquil on your own account, you ought



not to be so on account of an unfortunate friend.' 'Ah! bah! you do not know him; only see him in a difficulty; he is capable of abusing a hundred persons, of saying a hundred foolish things to get himself out of it.' 'Madame de la Motte,' replied I, 'you have just said more than I wished to hear; I have a last service to propose to you; it is now ten o'clock at night, we are approaching Bayet. I am going to leave you there in care of a friend for whom you know I can answer. I will return with your carriage to Bar-sur-Aube, and will warn M. de la Motte, who in an hour's time can come and fetch you in a post-chaise drawn by your best pair of horses. He will take charge of your most valuable effects, and you will together take, this very night, the road to Châlons, since that to Troyes would not be safe for you. Do not go to Boulogne, Calais, or Dieppe, at which places instructions perhaps have been already given to stop you; between these ports there are twenty places where for ten louis they will land you in England.' 'Sir,' replied Madame de la Motte, 'you are wearying me; I have allowed you to go on to the end because I was thinking of something else. Is it necessary to repeat to you ten times running that I have nothing to do with this affair? I repeat it, I am very sorry at having left the table, as though I were an accomplice in your cardinal's fooleries.' 'Madame,' observed I, 'let us say no more on the subject. Still I should like to add once more—after your avowal—that you will repent not having followed my advice. May Heaven grant in this case that your repentance may not be more poignant than usual.'

"We drove along in silence for half a hour. As we entered the town I entreated her to at least burn any papers which might compromise her or the cardinal. 'It is,' said I, 'a measure dictated by honour on the one side and by prudence on the other.' She consented; I offered to assist her, and as she did not refuse, on leaving the carriage I accompanied her to her room. Her husband, who had left home early in the morning to join a hunting party, had not yet returned. We opened a large chest of sandal-wood filled with papers of all colours and dimensions. Being nervously anxious to make quick work of the matter, I inquired if there were amongst them any bills of exchange, bonds, bank-notes, or drafts, and on receiving an answer in the negative I proposed to throw the

entire heap into the the fire. She insisted on at least a cursory examination being made of them. We proceeded with it, very slowly on her part, very precipitately on mine. It was whilst casting furtive glances upon some of the hundreds of letters from the Cardinal de Rohan, that I saw with pity the ravages which the delirium of love, aided by that of ambition, had wrought in the mind of this unhappy man. It is fortunate for the cardinal's memory that these letters were destroyed, but it is a loss for the history of human passions. What must have been the state of society when a prince of the church did not hesitate to write, to sign, and to address to a woman letters which in our days a man who respects himself the least in the world might commence reading, but would certainly never finish?

"Among these motley papers there were invoices, offers of estates for sale, prospectuses and advertisements of new inventions, &c. Some of the letters were from Böhmer and Bassenge, and made mention of the Necklace, spoke of terms expired, acknowledged the receipt of certain sums, and asked for larger ones. I consulted Madame de la Motte as to what should be done with them. Finding her hesitate, I took the shortest course, and threw them all into the fire. The affair occupied a considerable time. When it was over I took my leave of Madame de la Motte, urging her more strongly than ever to depart. She only answered me by promising to go to bed immediately. I then quitted her apartments, the atmosphere of which was poisoned by the odour arising from burning paper and wax impregnated with twenty different perfumes. It was three o'clock in the morning; at four o'clock she was arrested, and at half-past four was on her way to the Bastille. The examination which I had made of her papers, although a superficial one, had settled my doubts. I had observed so much extravagance in the letters of the cardinal, that I believed both he and the countess lost, and the one through the other."<sup>1</sup>

The countess was sound asleep when the officers of justice arrived. An inspector of police drew aside the bed curtains, and arousing her, showed her the *lettre-de-cachet* for her arrest.<sup>2</sup> From this moment until her departure from Bar-sur-Aube the countess

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. p. 80, *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> "Anecdotes du règne de Louis XVI.," vol. i. p. 385.

was closely guarded by *exempts* and cavalry of the marshalsea, while other *exempts* compelled her husband, who had returned home in the meantime, to accompany them while they made a strict search throughout the house."<sup>1</sup>

"M. de la Motte," observes Beugnot, "was very little affected at the arrest of his wife. He had been hunting the day before, and contemplated devoting several more days to this amusement. He called on me at six o'clock in the morning, and told me in a quiet, confidential sort of way, of the countess's arrest. He assumed a calmness in my presence that surprised me. 'Madame,' said he, 'will only be away for three or four days at the utmost. She is going to give the minister some explanations which he requires of her. I reckon that she will return on Wednesday or Thursday, when we will go and meet her, and bring her home in triumph.' 'Sir,' I replied to him, 'you are I dare say unaware that last night I advised your wife to start at once for England, and by the quickest route. Had she followed my counsel, she would not be as she now is, on the high road to Bastille. I now advise you to follow the course I suggested to her, which will be much safer for you than losing precious time and deceiving yourself by vain illusions.' The count shrugged his shoulders and left me, humming a tune. On the same day he took his place in the diligence, and gained England without delay. It was on the 18th of August that he left. Four days afterwards the police came to arrest him,"<sup>2</sup> but found their bird had flown.

Neither the forger Villette nor the counterfeit queen D'Olive were objects of suspicion even until several weeks had elapsed; but eight days after the arrest of the cardinal, the Count de Cagliostro and his wife were arrested and sent to join the grand almoner and the Countess de la Motte in the Bastille. In a memorial prepared by Cagliostro, wherein he puts forward a claim for damages on account of the losses sustained by him in consequence of this arrest, he says: "On August 23, 1785, the Commissary Chénon came to my house, attended by a bailiff and eight police-officers. He told me that he had orders to escort me to the lieutenant of police. He asked me for my keys, and obliged me to

<sup>1</sup> "Premier Interrogatoire de Madame de la Motte."

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. pp. 85, 86.



open my *escritoire*, which contained various medicines, amongst others six bottles of precious balsam. The bailiff in my presence seized upon the articles he chose to take, and particularly four bottles of the balsam. The *sbirri* that accompanied him followed their chief's example, and the pillage began."

The count then proceeds to estimate the amount of this pillage item by item, and ends by bringing it up to the considerable sum of 100,000 livres (£4000 sterling). Amongst these items he cites a green pocket-book containing forty-seven bank notes of 1000 livres each, besides which he asserts there were gold and silver coin—double-louis, sequins, and Spanish quadruples—plate, jewels, diamonds, &c., taken away.<sup>1</sup>

The cardinal's equerry and particular confidant, the Baron de Planta—a man of shady character, who had held a commission in a Swiss regiment in France, had been broke for some misconduct, and had been for years under a cloud at the time he was picked up by the Prince de Rohan during his Vienna embassy—was likewise arrested, but had the luck to get released after undergoing a brief examination.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire pour le Comte de Cagliostro contre Maître Chesnon fils et le Sieur de Launay," p. 4, *et seq.* In several of the earlier documents filed in the "Affaire du Collier," the prefix "Count" has been marked through with a pen, both where it occurs in the body of the instrument and also as part of Cagliostro's signature. After a time, the registrar or reporter seems to have grown tired of making this excision, and to have allowed the disputed title to pass unobliterated.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires pour servir," etc., par l'Abbé Georgel, vol. ii. pp. 49, 108.

## XXIV.

1785. AUG. 19—SEPT. 13.

A DREARY DAY AND NIGHT'S DRIVE.—THE BASTILLE.—A "VALOIS"  
SERVED OFF PEWTER.

As we have already mentioned, the Cardinal de Rohan immediately after his arrest was conducted, closely guarded, to his hotel at Versailles. In the afternoon of the same day he was removed to Paris, to the Palais-Cardinal, where he remained during the night; the officer commanding the escort of royal body-guards, having been solemnly cautioned to that effect, slept in the same apartment as his prisoner, whom he never trusted out of his sight for a single instant.

The day following the Marquis de Launay, governor of the Bastille, came to receive the grand almoner into his custody, and to transfer him to the iron grip of that mysterious state prison which rarely rendered up its victims until they were snatched away by the icy hand of Death. The cardinal wished to go thither on foot under cover of the night, so as to be free from observation. This favour was granted him, and, what is far more remarkable, he was allowed to take with him a couple of *valets de chambre* and a secretary, and was informed that he would be permitted to see his friends at stated times in the hall of this gloomy fortress.<sup>1</sup> At a later period of his confinement, he was allowed to drive of an evening along the Boulevards in the Governor's carriage, strictly guarded of course, and to give grand dinners in his rooms.<sup>2</sup>

The Countess de la Motte was arrested, it will be remembered,

<sup>1</sup> M. Feuillet de Conches has, among his curious collection of autographs relating to the affair of the Diamond Necklace, a series of reports from the Marquis de Launay to the Baron de Breteuil, which give, day by day, a list of the persons who visited the cardinal during his confinement in the Bastille.

<sup>2</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. i. pp. 600, 616.

at four o'clock on the morning of the 18th of August, and was at once hurried off to Paris, distant about one hundred and forty miles from Bar-sur-Aube, "entirely ignorant," she remarks, "whither I was intended to be conveyed, and so little anticipating the event that I was dozing in the carriage. In the course of our journey the vehicle was stopped, and questions asked by some person without, to whom the person within said: 'Don't you know this carriage?' 'Oh, yes,' replied the other. 'Don't stop us then; we have nothing but a state prisoner;' upon which the vehicle proceeded. Hearing this conversation I awoke; the termination of it roused all my faculties. 'What do you say?' exclaimed I in a tone of extreme agitation. 'A state prisoner! alas! then am I a state prisoner?' 'Oh, no, madame, no such thing;' and these people swore that I was not one. But there is some excuse for them; they belonged to the police, and perjury and bearing false witness is no small part of their employment. Yet they used such kind expressions that, knowing my innocence, I flattered myself I was not deceived. One of them said to me: 'Madame, it is so very early, I'm afraid we shall not be able to get an interview with the Baron de Breteuil, who has given me orders if we arrived too early to conduct you to my house, and to wait upon him about eleven; therefore be composed and try to sleep a little.' All this time I remained upon my seat; but soon after, they desired me to conceal myself in the bottom of the vehicle; this was when we arrived at the Porte St.-Antoine, where they endeavoured as much as possible to place themselves in such positions before me that I might neither be seen by any one nor observe the turning of the Bastille. Finding myself rather warm, 'Let me see,' said I; and looking out I discovered the Bastille. 'How!' exclaimed I, with agitated surprise; 'is it to the Bastille then that I am going? Oh! you are all impostors!' They endeavoured to pacify me, and begged me not to make a disturbance; told me that they were not their own masters; that they had received their orders, but that they were absolutely ignorant of the motive for which I was taken to the Bastille, and that they were persuaded in a very few days I should be liberated.

"By this time we arrived at the first bridge leading to the governor's house. The postillion knocked, and many *invalides* came out. The post-chaise belonging to the police drove up to the



governor's door, who came out himself in a *robe de chambre* to the carriage to give me his hand, begging me at the same time to excuse his *déshabille*. He then conducted me into a large hall. Soon afterwards, the king's lieutenant arrived with a large book, wherein he entered the date of my arrival, and afterwards presented it to me to sign my name, which request I complied with. During this ceremony, which only occupied a few minutes, the governor was in the court with the *exempts*, who were giving him an account of every circumstance which occurred in the execution of their orders. This over, the governor returned, and asked me if I would take any refreshment, adding: 'We shall take great care of you, madame.' I then asked him into which apartment I should go to receive the Baron de Breteuil, remarking at the same time that I hoped he would come at eleven, as the *exempts* had informed me. 'Oh, there is not the least doubt of it, madame,' replied the governor. He then called Saint-Jean, the turnkey, to whom he gave my papers, to place them, as I have since heard, in the archives; after which the governor desired the king's lieutenant to conduct me to my apartment. Some little conversation passed relative to the place of my destination, of which the lieutenant seemed uncertain. 'Oh,' said the governor, '*La Comtée* is the best; it is very light.' He then put me in charge of the king's lieutenant, whose arm I took, persuaded that I should be shown into some other apartment, and for a far different purpose. As I went along I saw some soldiers (*invalides*) enveloped in blue cloaks, with large hoods over their heads, and long bands hanging down. As I passed them I was not a little surprised to see them turn their backs towards me, it being the rule when any prisoner arrives for them to turn themselves round lest they should take too much notice. I began to laugh with the lieutenant at the novelty of this, and particularly at these grotesque figures in their masquerade. . . .

"We passed on till we arrived at the court, the staircase of which led to the tower of *La Comtée*. After ascending this we arrived at the apartment destined for my reception, all the gates of which were very large, and moreover open. St. Jean, who was to be my turnkey, attended me thither.

"Struck with such a dismal change of situation, so very different from what I had ever been accustomed to, I could not help express-

ing my dissatisfaction to the lieutenant. 'If this is the place,' said I, 'which the governor pleases to call my apartment, be sure I am greatly obliged to him.' I then went to look at the bed, which was indeed a wretched one; told him that it would be impossible for me to sleep in so miserable a bed as that, and demanded if he could not accommodate me with one as good as the cardinal's? He replied, very politely, that he really did not comprehend my meaning. . . .

"My disapprobation of the bed, however, was attended with favourable results, for the turnkey substituted for the one which I had great reason to complain of an excellent feather bed with fine sheets and curtains. Thus accommodated, and extremely fatigued, I attempted to get some rest; but I was scarce in bed when the lieutenant, with my own and another turnkey, arrived. The two turnkeys examined my clothes and my pockets, out of which they took all the contents, consisting of several little articles, particularly a gold *étui* set with pearls, another of tortoiseshell, a small ivory box ornamented with gold, having on its lid a miniature with a gold rim, containing a small mirror and some rouge, an English pocket-knife, a knife with a tortoiseshell handle and gold blade, my purse, containing eighteen louis and about nineteen livres, and a gold repeating watch with a diamond chain.

"Indignant at such humiliating treatment, which I could not patiently endure, I remonstrated with some asperity, and threatened to inform the Baron de Breteuil, whom I was simple enough to believe I should see. They were, however, regardless of my threats, and having executed their orders, departed through those dreadful doors which with their horrid bolts were closed upon me, and the sound pierced my very soul. . . .

"About eight o'clock the turnkey came to my door. I spoke to him, but he paid no attention to me, and departed without saying a word. I rose to examine my dismal habitation, and traversed the room in every direction backwards and forwards. I opened the window to see if I could discover anybody, or make myself sufficiently conspicuous for any one to see me. I climbed upon the sill, and held my face close to the bars, but I could discover nothing; as for people, it was impossible to distinguish them."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 389, *et seq.*

At noon the lieutenant of the Bastille came to fetch the countess to an interview, as she asserts she thought, with the Baron de Breteuil, instead of which she was conducted into the presence of the lieutenant of police and the Commissary Chénon, who commenced examining her respecting the Diamond Necklace, and ended by accusing her of having first obtained possession of, and afterwards absconding to a foreign country with the missing jewel. Madame de la Motte, perfectly unabashed, says that she laughed outright in the commissary's face at what she styles the "ridiculous absurdity" of such an accusation. Her examination was continued day by day, and when completed, the commissary, as the countess artfully states, "gabbled over something which she scarce understood," but which she nevertheless signed. "It was this cunning dissembler," she remarks, "who made me sign those odious things which I was supposed to have said myself, and which were so detestable that when they were read by his majesty he spat upon them, saying, 'Fie upon the filthy creature!'"<sup>1</sup>

The countess, who in early life was glad to feed upon broken victuals passed through a trap-hole in the miserable hovel that sheltered the Saint-Remi family at Fontette, appears not to have entirely approved of the *cuisine* of the Bastille. What more particularly annoyed her, however, was that she, who had been latterly accustomed to gold and silver plate, should now be expected to dine off vulgar pewter. According to her own account, she preferred enduring the pangs of hunger to submitting to such an indignity, and sent the dishes away untouched. The turnkey, she tells us, somewhat surprised at this proceeding, "said in a rude manner, 'So then you don't choose to eat, don't you?' 'No,' replied I, 'I don't choose to eat, and I desire to know if you serve the cardinal off pewter? Inform the governor that the Valois are quite as nice as and entitled to equal respect with the Rohans.' The turnkey was astounded. He looked at me respectfully, and mildly answered that he was ignorant who I was; then begging my pardon he departed, and returned shortly afterwards with a better dinner served in beautiful dishes with silver covers."<sup>2</sup>

Poor Madame de la Tour, Count de la Motte's sister, having

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 408.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 416.



applied to the Marquis de Launay for permission to visit the countess in the Bastille, was arrested by two *exempts* on leaving the governor's house, and forthwith conducted to a cell in the gloomy old fortress, where she was kept confined for a period of six months, in spite of the efforts of her husband and family to procure her release. This was paying rather a heavy penalty for her feelings of sympathy towards an incriminated sister-in-law.

Before the countess had been immured in the Bastille a fortnight, we find her attempting a rambling exculpation of herself in a document which bears no address, but was no doubt intended to produce an impression on the Baron de Breteuil, and which she describes as "Explanatory reflections on the accusations made by Monseigneur le Cardinal de Rohan."

"Does Monseigneur le Cardinal de Rohan believe me ass enough not to have disappeared immediately if I had desired to retain the Necklace under some pretext, as he accuses me of doing?"

"Does Monseigneur le Cardinal believe that I caused the Necklace to be sold here under the eyes both of the vendor and of himself, and that I should have been able, had I been guilty, to have so far deluded them as to remain at Paris so tranquilly as I did, knowing all the while the date of payment? Should I not rather have taken a safe departure before the moment of payment arrived? Monseigneur le Cardinal de Rohan was at Saverne for six weeks. Could not I have profited by his absence to join my husband in England, with my whole household and have remained there?"

"Instead of which my husband was there by his orders, and returned as agreed upon with Monseigneur le Cardinal. Would it have been possible, with me living almost at his door, for him not to have given me something during four years, or at least to have taken care of me and mine, since all I had was my pension of 800 livres? The expenses of my house were always heavy enough to make it requisite for the cardinal to give me large sums to keep it up; and at this time I solicited more than ever both at Versailles and at Paris. Every day I required *voitures de remise*, which were very dear; I had, too, a house at Versailles to reside in when there. How, moreover, let me ask, should I have done the bidding

of a sovereign without anticipating great returns from it, since sooner or later this intimacy would certainly have been discovered? How could I have exercised so little precaution, I say, as to remain in Paris, where, if guilty, I should have taken the utmost care on the contrary to appear more at my ease than under ordinary circumstances, fearful of being suspected by Monseigneur le Cardinal, whose people, and especially M. le Baron de Planta (whom he also brought as a witness against me), came continually to my house?

"Will Monseigneur le Cardinal dare to deny all the facts which I have advanced in my examination, and which will at least convince him that I have been forced to this, and that it has only been in self-defence? But he accuses me wrongfully. I must tell the truth to prove my innocence, and to prove that he was not in a position to use me as a servant, as Monseigneur le Cardinal pretends, in an affair of such importance, since it concerned the person of the queen. Moreover I do not know any one who is attached to her.

"I have the honour to be, with submission,

"COMTESSE DE VALOIS DE LA MOTTE DE LA PÉNICIÈRE.

"At the Bastille this Monday, 29th August, 1785."<sup>1</sup>

Another letter is extant, bearing date Sept. 13, 1785, evidently written by the countess during her confinement in the Bastille, though it has no signature to it, and which, couched in terms of extreme familiarity, is addressed to the Duke de Guines, a very grand gentleman of the court, and, what is more, one of the queen's most intimate friends. In this letter, in the midst of the most absurd and nonsensical details, the countess introduces the names of her sister and of Cagliostro and his wife, on the two last of whom she seeks to turn the accusation directed against herself.<sup>2</sup> The duke, who pretended not to understand the drift of the letter, sent it to the Baron de Breteuil.

<sup>1</sup> Autograph letter of Madame de la Motte's in the National Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Anonymous autograph letter of Madame de la Motte's in the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches.

## XXV.

## EFFECT PRODUCED ON THE PUBLIC MIND BY THESE ARRESTS.—THE ENEMIES OF THE QUEEN.

It is impossible to conceive the sensation produced throughout France, and indeed throughout Europe generally, by these arrests and the extravagant rumours to which they gave rise. Marie-Antoinette in various ways had unfortunately made numerous enemies—through her persistent efforts, for instance, to get the Duke de Choiseul appointed prime minister; through her too decided partiality for particular favourites, for whom she secured both places and pensions; and through what was affectingly styled her want of prudence—in other words, her open disregard of the rigid formalities of French court etiquette. Arrayed against her were many of the oldest families in France, each of whom cherished some particular grievance of its own. The consequence was, there were many hostile interests at work intent upon destroying her reputation and bringing about her ruin if need be, even at the expense of the monarchy itself, so that the great fraud of the Diamond Necklace was altogether regarded in the light of a political event, and no time was lost by the different inimical factions in twisting it to serve their own purposes, without the slightest regard being paid by any one of them to the real character of the act itself.

We will here interrupt the course of our narrative to examine at some length into the origin of this widespread animosity against the queen, and to trace the causes of its rapid extensions through all classes of French society. To do this it will be necessary for us to go back to the very outset of her career.

When Marie-Antoinette, then a young girl of fifteen, first set foot on French soil, nothing could exceed the enthusiasm with which she was welcomed. Her progress from Strasbourg to Versailles was one long ovation. At Versailles, save the dauphin's old



maiden aunts, who made themselves sufficiently disagreeable, and the king's mistress, Madame Dubarry, who could not tolerate this fair and pure young spirit, every one was more or less charmed with her. The old king, worn out by excesses, and weary of the deceptive flattery which he daily had to listen to, was captivated, not merely by her personal graces, but by her frank and lively nature, her open unaffected ways. The women may have secretly envied her, but the men could not help adoring her. She far excelled the young female members of the royal family in beauty. At the time of her marriage her form was not fully developed: her stature was short, and her figure altogether small, though perfectly proportioned; her arm was finely rounded and of a dazzling whiteness, her hand plump, her fingers tapering, her nails transparent and rose-coloured, her foot charming. When she grew taller and stouter the foot and hand remained perfect, her figure only became a little inelegant, and her chest a trifle too broad. Her face formed a rather long oval; her complexion, which was really dazzling, displayed the most tender shades of colour, from pearly white to delicate rose tint; her eyes were blue, soft, and animated, and shaded by long, full lashes; her nose was aquiline, and slightly tapered at the end; her mouth was small and delicate and well arched, her lower lip prominent, after the Austrian type; her neck was slender and a trifle long, but well set; her forehead was convex, and furnished with too little of her beautiful chesnut-colour hair. The *coiffure* of the empire would have accomplished marvels for her, for the hair turned down over her forehead would have given to her face a regular beauty.<sup>1</sup>

Though the young dauphiness was addicted to reverie, and displayed a fondness for retirement in the society of a few chosen friends, she was far from being of a reserved disposition; indeed, she was a good deal given to gaiety of that light, playful, almost pert character which imparts movement and life to all around. She forced every one to laugh with her. She cared nothing for the restraints imposed by the barriers of etiquette. If it did not please her to walk in stately fashion, she would run and skip about, regardless of her train or her ladies of honour. In winter-

<sup>1</sup> M. F. Barrière.

time she would scamper over the slippery ground, dragging after her the youngest lady of her court, whose duty it was to hold up her train, and delighted while glancing behind at the score of racing trains which etiquette required should follow in procession. In the old king's days she was known to have even laughed out loud in the royal box at Preville's funny face, to the great scandal of those who only deigned to smile.<sup>1</sup>

At the very first court she held after she became queen, provoked by some pleasantries on the part of one of her ladies, and the ridiculous figures cut by certain ancient court dames who had come to pay their respects to her, she could not refrain from laughing at them behind her fan. This naturally enough gave great offence to these antiquated dowagers, who vowed the queen had mocked at them, that she had not a proper respect for age, and was utterly wanting in propriety. The name of "*moqueuse*" was given to her in consequence.<sup>2</sup>

The young queen, with the full sanction of her husband, went early one morning to see the sun rise from the highest point of Marly gardens—a harmless enough proceeding, one would think, but which nevertheless gave rise to most disgraceful calumnies. On another occasion she displayed her skill as a charioteer, by driving about Marly in a cabriolet, preceded merely by a single officer of the king's body-guard. This spectacle astonished the old courtiers, who had never seen a queen handle the reins before, and who therefore pronounced the proceeding highly unbecoming, if not, indeed, improper. At Marly, too, Marie-Antoinette established a kind of *café*, to which the lords and ladies of the court betook themselves in their morning gowns. All etiquette was set aside, and people enjoyed here the same kind of liberty which was ordinarily to be met with in establishments of this class. Every one had his own little table, at which he was served with whatever he asked for.<sup>3</sup>

Marie-Antoinette, who was fond of dancing, organized a series of fancy dress balls in the *Salle de Comédie* at Versailles, into the

<sup>1</sup> "Histoire de Marie-Antoinette," par E. et J. de Goncourt, pp. 39, 102.

<sup>2</sup> "Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol i.

<sup>3</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. i. p. 233.

spirit of which her brothers-in-law and their young wives entered most heartily. Being herself a good dancer, she was glad to secure good dancers for these entertainments, but had to undergo no end of reproaches because she, a young queen of twenty years of age, had appealed to the minister of war to grant leave of absence to certain officers, favourites at these fêtes, who had been ordered to rejoin their regiments. Everything she did was wrong. She was blamed for being present at the summer promenades on the terrace of the château of Versailles, then open to the general public, when, attired in a plain white cambric dress and a simple straw hat, she and Madame Elisabeth, and perhaps her married sisters-in-law, would mix unobserved among the crowd, or seated on a bench, would listen to the music performed by the king's guards; watching and commenting meanwhile on the secret flirtations which under cover of the night were carried on on these occasions.

The foregoing incidents seem to have been harmless enough, but the same can hardly be said of her excursions to the *bals de l'opéra*, when "lost in their vortex, she was happy or trembling under her mask," and whither she would resort attended merely by a single lady of the court and with her servants in undress grey liveries. On one of these occasions her carriage broke down, and she was obliged to have recourse to a public vehicle. On entering the theatre she is reported to have exclaimed to her friends, "It is I, come in a *fiacre*! Isn't it droll?" One can well conceive an incident like this giving rise to much unpleasant scandal, and can sympathise in the reproaches which her brother the Emperor Joseph addressed to her on her frequent presence at these entertainments.

It was the misfortune of Marie-Antoinette to have made for herself a host of enemies almost from the very first day she was called upon to share a throne. Among others, of her brother-in-law, the Count de Provence, who, attached to her at the outset of her career, took to quizzing her, and criticising her conduct, and even to caricaturing her, while preserving an outward appearance of friendship towards her, soon after she became a queen. The Prince de Condé, allied to the Cardinal de Rohan by marriage, was embittered against her because she very properly declined to receive his mistress, Madame de Monaco, at court. A warm friendship had sprung



up between Marie-Antoinette and the young Duke de Chartres, afterwards Orléans *Egalité*, on her first arrival in France; but after a time, Louis XVI., who disliked the duke, and made a point of insulting his friends whenever he got the chance, availed himself of the duke's known immorality to forbid the queen associating with him on the same familiar terms as heretofore. The consequence was, the duke, who was unaware of the real cause of his disgrace, conceived a strong dislike for the queen, who on her part retaliated by saying many spiteful things respecting him. Dislike grew into hatred, and hatred grew bitter and more bitter, until at last the duke pursued Marie-Antoinette with a relentless vengeance that was positively diabolic, and which only terminated with her life. Dissolute, gouty old De Maurepas, prime minister, and all his kin, and more particularly his nephew, the Duke d'Aiguillon, a former creature of the Dubarry's, and now a creature of the Duke d'Orléans, and whose disgrace at court had been brought about by the queen's influence, were arrayed against her on account of the persistent exertions she made to get her favourite, De Choiseul—whom Catherine of Russia used to style the coachman of Europe, as when in power he directed all the cabinets—appointed prime minister in De Maurepas' stead. M. de Vergennes too, whose handsome Greek wife the queen would not consent to receive, cherished a steady hatred of her—all the more dangerous because it was concealed—and even wrote regular reports respecting her to Louis XVI., which the king kept secret, and which only came to light on the discovery of the famous "*armoire de fer*" in the wall of the royal closet in the Tuileries, a few months before the king's death.

At the head of the enemies the queen had succeeded in making among her own sex were, Mesdames Adelaide and Louise, two of the king's aunts, the former of whom had for a while exercised a control over her nephew, and was now jealous and irritated beyond measure at the influence which the young queen had acquired over her husband. Since their exile to Lorraine, however, these old ladies had been comparatively powerless for mischief. The partiality which Marie-Antoinette displayed for the society of the Countess Jules de Polignac, had had the effect of estranging her sisters-in-law from her. Count d'Artois, wishing to bring about a recon-

ciliation, said one day to the queen, on kissing her hand, "My little sister, for a very long time you have slighted your sisters-in-law, who are much attached to you, and who feel much afflicted at your behaviour. I beg you to bestow on them your warmest friendship, for they are worthy of it." The queen replied somewhat petulantly, "These ladies do not render me the deference which is my due ; they ought to remember that I am queen, and, moreover, that I belong to the House of Austria, which takes precedence of all." The Count d'Artois could not help smiling, and, pressing the queen's hand, said, "My little sister, since you jest about the affair, I am enchanted, as it proves to me that, whatever rancour may exist at present, will not last long."<sup>1</sup> The count, however, did not prove himself a true prophet, for the ladies never became completely reconciled, and showed merely a distant regard for each other. Perhaps the most dangerous enemy the queen had was the stiff old Countess de Marsan—herself a Rohan, and cousin of the cardinal, for whom in past years she had secured the post of grand almoner—who during the late reign had been governess to the king's grandchildren, and who had been from the very first greatly scandalized at Marie-Antoinette's freedom of manners : the dauphiness's most innocent acts being magnified by this old prude into crimes. If she glanced at any one, it was set down to coquetry ; if she chanced to laugh, it was either unbecoming, or else her gaiety was all forced ; if she wore her hair loose, she was compared to a bacchante ; and even her simple white muslin dresses were pronounced to be stage costumes, worn solely to create an effect. The Duchess de Noailles, who had been Marie-Antoinette's chief lady of honour from the moment of her arrival in France, and Madame de Cossé, her lady of the bedchamber, threw up their posts on the Princess de Lamballe being appointed mistress of the queen's household, and both enlisted themselves among the malcontents, which comprised, in addition to those we have already mentioned, the powerful families of Conti, Montmorency, Clermont-Tonnerre, La Rochefoucauld, and Crillon.

<sup>1</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. i. p. 339.

## XXVI.

## LITTLE TRIANON, AND THE QUEEN'S SOCIETY THERE.

THE enemies of the queen at the moment the Necklace scandal burst upon the public were many and formidable ; the real friends that she had capable of defending her were but few. The Baron de Breteuil was well enough disposed towards her, still it was not so much the shielding of the queen's reputation as compassing the downfall of his enemy, the Cardinal de Rohan, that he had at heart. The Abbé de Vermond, who had been Marie-Antoinette's instructor, and was now a sort of secretary to her, had only his fidelity to recommend him. He could influence the queen, but wanted the head to direct her wisely. Specious M. de Calonne was too busy raising new loans to supply a continually emptying royal exchequer to trouble himself about necklaces or cardinals ; besides, no particular friendship existed now between the queen and him. He no longer gallantly told her that if what she required was simply difficult it was already done, and that if it was impossible, it should be done. The Duke de Choiseul had been dead these several months past. Those intimate friends of Marie-Antoinette's with whom her daily life was chiefly spent, and who formed what was styled her society, shared her unpopularity to some extent, for it was the favours heaped upon certain members of the Trianon set which had estranged so many of the old nobility from her. Moreover, with the exception of the Count d'Artois and the Duke de Coigny, there was not a man of influence among them who could do her real service in the hour of need.

The *habitués* of the Little Trianon—"the queen's society," as they were styled—comprised, first, her youngest brother-in-law, the Count d'Artois, who danced with her, hunted with her, acted with her, and entered generally into the spirit of her amusements ; then there was his wife, the countess, exceedingly short of stature, with a complexion as fresh as a rose, and a prepossessing if not a



pretty face, yet with a nose which, as Marie-Antoinette wickedly remarked, had never been finished; at one time, too, there were the Count and Countess de Provence, the latter an elder sister of the Countess d'Artois, and the reverse of good-looking. Louis XVI. in his blunt way once told his brother that his wife was by no means handsome, to which the Count de Provence quietly replied, "Sire, I find her to my taste, and that is quite sufficient."<sup>1</sup> Then there was the queen's sister-in-law, Madame Elisabeth, her true and loving friend until death; next there were the Polignacs, foremost among whom was the Countess Jules, the queen's most particular favourite, who was very handsome, with expressive blue eyes, a ravishing mouth, beautiful small white teeth, a nose just a trifle *retroussé*, a forehead perhaps a little too high, magnificent brown hair, a skin almost as white as alabaster, low shoulders and a well set neck which seemed to give height to her small figure. A touching sweetness formed the foundation of her physiognomy—looks, features, smiles, everything with her partook of the angelic. She had, moreover, wit and grace, and a natural ease and *abandon* which were positively charming. Negligence was her coquetry, dishabille her full dress. It has been said of her that she never looked better than when in a loose morning gown, and with a simple rose, perhaps, in her hair. When the queen first took notice of her, she and her husband, with their two young children, were living in a very humble style (we have heard what Madame de la Motte had to say of her poverty)<sup>2</sup> on a miserable income of three hundred and twenty pounds a year. A pension of six thousand livres was immediately granted her, and ere long she was appointed governess of the royal children, with a salary of fifty thousand livres and her husband named postmaster-general, and master of the horse to the queen, with a salary of eighty thousand livres; in addition to which a joint pension of eighty thousand livres was conferred upon them, besides other considerable emoluments which brought their income almost up to three hundred thousand livres.<sup>3</sup> The count, who through the influence of the queen had been raised to the dignity of a duke, seems to have been

<sup>1</sup> "Les derniers jours de Trianon," par M. Capefigue, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> "Weber's Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," vol. ii. p. 263.

an aimable sort of man, very generally liked, for he had not allowed his good fortune to spoil him. His sister, the Countess Diane, one of Madame Elisabeth's ladies of honour, was given, we are told, to gallantry and intrigue; her son by the Marquis d'Autichamp—the same wicked rake who was so anxious to escort Madame de la Motte from Lunéville to Paris—entered the Russian service, and was killed at the battle of Austerlitz.<sup>1</sup> Her personal appearance was the very reverse of engaging. She was compared to a brown owl (she was a southern brunette), with all its feathers in disorder, and to a paroquet, with a crooked beak and round eyes surrounded by dark circles.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, she had only to open her mouth to have face, form, toilette, the little she had received from nature, and the little that she herself did to render herself pretty, entirely forgotten. It was impossible to know her and not to be prepossessed in her favour. Her arch way of looking at a subject, her piquant turn of thought, which was almost epigrammatic, her sudden changes from gaiety to sadness, from irony to sensibility, her audacity, which nothing could intimidate, her daring and contagious recklessness, made her a general favourite in the society over which she to some extent dominated. A woman like her was invaluable to a court already depressed with melancholy, to put life into the conversation, to dissipate dull thoughts, to defy alarm, to prophesy fine weather, and display a perfect disregard for the future.

The young Princess de Lamballe, one of the earliest friends Marie-Antoinette made in France, ranked next to the Countess Jules de Polignac in her favour. She was a trifle jealous at having been supplanted by her rival, and rather held aloof from the *Trianon coterie*. Extremely beautiful, as amiable as she was handsome, and left a widow when she was only eighteen—her husband, son of the old Duke de Penthièvre, who received Madame de la Motte so courteously at Château-Villain, having fallen a victim to early debauchery—a peculiar interest attached to her. A native of the sunny south, she nevertheless possessed all the northern graces. The sweet serenity of her countenance was its

<sup>1</sup> "Lettres et Documents Indédits de Louis XVI. et Marie-Antoinette," par M. Feuillet de Conches, vol. iii. p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> "Souvenirs de la Marquise de Créqui," par le Comte de Courchamps.

great charm : there was tranquillity even in the flash of her eye. On her beautiful forehead, shaded by her long fair hair, not a cloud, not a trace existed of the early grief she had been called upon to suffer. Her mind had all the serene beauty of her face. She was gentle, affectionate, full of caresses, always just, always ready to make sacrifices, devoted even in trifles, and disinterested above everything. Who has not felt pity for her subsequent unhappy fate ?

No one occupied a more prominent position in the queen's society at the Little Trianon than the Baron de Besenval, a handsome-looking man past middle age, tall and well proportioned, with sharply-defined profile and large well-formed nose, quick, intelligent eye, and a small mouth curled up in a mocking and disdainful pout. Of cultivated tastes, full of insolent grace, perfectly content with himself and ever ready to laugh at others, pleasure was the sole pursuit of his life until the death of Louis XV. brought him into closer contact with the Count d'Artois, colonel-general of the Swiss guards, in which corps Besenval, himself a Swiss, held a command. Of the count he made a friend, got presented through his influence to the queen, whose confidence he secured and whom he almost directed ; was appointed lieutenant-general of the army, grand cross commander of St.-Louis, and inspector-general of the Swiss guards, without seeming at all astonished at his good fortune. In the hour of danger, however, he was found singularly wanting, and it was soon evident that he was not the man to save the monarchy or stem the tide of revolution. His conduct while in command of the army of Paris has been very generally and deservedly condemned.

M. de Vaudreuil was another prominent member of the Trianon *coterie*, who, entering early in life the highest and most exclusive society of Versailles, had come to the conclusion that human nature, as it was to be found in courts, was neither so very beautiful nor so very great as was commonly represented. Intellect charmed him, and above all that intellect which sparkled with wit. He was the friend of all clever men, spoke but rarely himself, but would lie in wait behind the hubbub of the talkers and suddenly discharge his arrow right at the mark. What made him a favourite with the queen was the fact of his being the best private



actor of his day. When young he had been remarkably handsome, but the small-pox had destroyed his good looks. Suffering from disease of the lungs, and subject to nervous twitchings of the body and to frequent fits of depression, he had all the immunities of a sick person accorded him. The good nature of the Duchess de Polignac and the indulgence of his friends caused them to tolerate his caprices and whims. His disposition changed daily according to his bodily ailments; still he was not without certain vigorous virtues, for he was noble, generous, frank, loyal, and a devoted and constant friend.

Next on the list of the queen's favourites comes M. d'Adhémar, whose musical skill and admirable voice had procured him the applause of the master of the king's music. He wrote verses and songs, acted well, and accompanied himself on the harpsichord. His was but a little mind; nevertheless, under a guise of modesty and humility he nourished grand schemes of ambition, and eventually succeeded in securing for himself the English embassy, in connection with which we shall hear of him again. His complaisance was proverbial; he courted every one, offended no one, made innocent jokes in an undertone of voice, and never lost his temper. It will be understood what manner of man he was when we remark, that the women spoke to him when they had nothing to say, the men when they had nothing to do. Harmless as he appears to have been, he did not escape the notice of the lampooners of the time, who characterized him as—

“ Un marquis de hasard, ha, ha, ha, ha !  
Chevalier d'industrie,  
Major d'infanterie,  
Colin de comédie,  
C'est Monsieur d'Adhémar, a, a, a, a.”<sup>1</sup>

The remaining *habitués* of the Little Trianon were the three Coignys: the Duke de Coigny, the queen's most constant friend, whom the Trianon set desired to make her lover, which the Duke d'Orléans maintained he already was—styling the young dauphin “*Le fils de Coigny* ;”<sup>2</sup> the Count de Coigny, a big, good-tempered

<sup>1</sup> “Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette,” etc. vol. i. p. 355.

<sup>2</sup> “Louis XVI.,” par Alexandre Dumas, vol. iii. p. 167.

man ; and the Chevalier de Coigny, an agreeable flatterer, whom all the women strove to secure to themselves, and who was a favourite wherever he went ; the Duke de Guines, the "Versailles Journal," as he was styled, who knew and repeated all the scandal of the court, ridiculed everybody, and was consequently disliked by everybody, who was an excellent musician, and prided himself immensely on having played the flute with the great Frederick ; the Prince d'Henin, a philanthropist at court like a fish out of water ; the Bailli du Crussol, who made jokes with a most serious air ; the Count de Polastron, who played the violin in a ravishing style, and his pale and languishing wife—the amiable "Goddess of Melancholy," as she was called ; the Count and Countess de Chalons ; the Count and Countess d'Andlau ; the sensible, witty, and good-natured Madame de Coigny ; the Duke de Guiche, captain of the king's guards, and his young and lovely duchess, daughter of the Duchess Jules de Polignac.<sup>1</sup> Besides the foregoing, there were a few distinguished foreigners, such as Prince Esterhazy, the Prince de Ligne, the Count de Fersen, a prominent member of the Swedish aristocracy, who was styled by the women the "Beau Fersen," and who in subsequent years drove the *berline* in which the royal family sought to escape from France, and eventually lost his life in an *émeute* at Stockholm in the year 1810 ; and the Baron de Stedingk, the intimate friend of Fersen and a great favourite with Marie-Antoinette, who said to him, on parting with him in 1787 : "Remember, M. de Stedingk, that under no circumstances can any harm happen to you ;"<sup>2</sup> implying that her influence, which she believed to be paramount, would be exercised for his protection in whatever quarter of the world he might chance to be, and little dreaming that in a very few years there would not be another woman in all France so powerless as she.

Having made acquaintance with the queen's society at the Trianon, let us now see what the Trianon itself was like ; that Little Trianon to which Marie-Antoinette retired to escape the

<sup>1</sup> "Histoire de Marie-Antoinette," par E. et J. de Goncourt. Most of the foregoing particulars respecting the queen's society at the Little Trianon have been derived from this work.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires Posthumes du Feld-Maréchal Comte de Stedingk," vol. iii. pp. 17, 74.

splendours, the restraints, the intrigues, and, most of all, the slanders of the court, and enjoy the society of friends of her own choosing; a retirement which unhappily gave rise to new calumnies—calumnies which it does not seem in nature for one woman to invent or propagate of another, but which Madame de la Motte more than insinuates in her lying “*Mémoires Justificatifs*,” and which have outlived the other hideous slanders of which Marie-Antoinette was the victim; that Little Trianon, where Madame de la Motte asserts most of her pretended interviews with the queen took place, and where she affirms Marie-Antoinette was accustomed to receive the Cardinal de Rohan, who, according to the countess’s statements, would come late at night disguised as a valet, and spend hour after hour with the queen in a small pavilion in the gardens while she remained outside on the watch.<sup>1</sup> On one occasion the Cardinal de Rohan certainly did go to the Little Trianon, and in a partial disguise, but it was by bribing the gatekeeper that he gained admission to the grounds. It was at the time when both building and gardens were brilliantly illuminated in honour of the visit of the Grand Duke Paul of Russia—afterwards the mad and luckless Emperor Paul—and his Grand Duchess, who were travelling about Europe under the titles of Count and Countess du Nord. The cardinal, who professed great anxiety to see these illuminations, promised the gatekeeper to remain in his lodge until all the company had left for Versailles; instead of which, when the man’s back was turned, he slunk into the gardens, and, with his cardinal’s red stockings showing below his overcoat, took up the most prominent position he could select, where he waited for the royal family and its suite to pass. The queen saw him and recognised him, and next day gave orders for the instant dismissal of the gatekeeper; but Madame Campan, who had been informed of all the circumstances, appealed to Marie-Antoinette in the man’s behalf, and succeeded in getting him retained in his post.”<sup>2</sup>

To console Marie-Antoinette for not having appointed her favourite, the Duke de Choiseul, prime minister, Louis XVI. is said to have given her the Little Trianon, which skirts the park of

<sup>1</sup> “*Life of the Countess de la Motte*,” by herself, vol. i. p. 312, *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> “*Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette*,” by Madame Campan, vol. i. p. 242.



Versailles and adjoins the gardens of the Great Trianon, to do as she pleased with. "You love flowers," said he : "ah ! well, I have a bouquet for you—the Little Trianon."

The repairing and embellishing of this miniature palace, the alteration and enlargement of its grounds, with a host of artists and gardeners subject to her sway, was for the next year or two Marie-Antoinette's greatest delight. The building, erected by the architect Gabriel, for Louis XV., is of a square form, and each of its sides has a frontage of only seventy feet. It is in the Italian style, and its different façades are ornamented with Corinthian columns or pilasters and enriched friezes and cornices. The depraved old king in the last years of his life was enamoured with this "little corner of his grand Versailles." It was to his taste, for here he could live in retirement and at his ease. In addition to its flower garden, laid out in the formal French style, there was a botanical garden, which Louis XIV., at the time he lived at the Great Trianon, caused to be planted with exotic trees and shrubs of multifarious tints and perfumes then almost unknown in France.

The principal entrance to the Little Trianon leads immediately to the grand staircase with its handsome gilded balustrade, in the interlacings of which the initials M.A. are prominently displayed. Facing the landing, as if in menace, is a head of the Medusa, which proved powerless however to keep out scandal. After a small ante-chamber comes the *salle-à-manger*, decorated with paintings of the four seasons by Dejeune, and bathing and fishing subjects by Pater, and the re-joined *parquet* of which shows traces of the opening through which Lorient's flying table was accustomed to ascend at the orgies of Louis XV. In this apartment commence the ornaments upon the panelling—crossed quivers surmounted by wreaths of roses and garlands of flowers—executed by order of Marie-Antoinette. The little *salon* near the *salle-à-manger* displays in relief upon its sides emblems of the vintage and the attributes of the genius of comedy. Hanging from festoons of grapes are bunches and baskets of fruit, masks and tambourines, flutes and guitars, and beneath the marble beards of the goats that support the mantelpiece more bunches of grapes are entwined. At the four corners of the cornice of the grand *salon* are groups of cupids

at play. Each panel, surmounted by the emblems of literature and the arts, springs from a stalk of triple flowering lilies, garlanded with laurel and with a wreath of full-blown roses by way of crest. Four paintings by Watteau—of those graceful Decameron-like subjects in which he excelled—are on the walls of this apartment. In the little cabinet which precedes the queen's bed-chamber the finest arabesques run over the woodwork; here are cupids bearing cornucopias overflowing with flowers, cooing doves, smoking tripods, and crossed bows and arrows hanging to ribbons. Bouquets of poppies intermingled with thousands of small flowers, all most delicately rendered, are scattered over the panels of the bedroom; the bed with its light blue silk hangings, the chairs and couches *en suite*, and the console tables, looking-glasses, clock and chandeliers being, it is said, much as they were in the days of Marie-Antoinette.

The most elegant façade of the little palace, with its four fluted Corinthian columns and its four flights of steps in the form of an Italian terrace, looks over the French garden, with its flower beds of geometric form and the flowers themselves planted in straight lines. In the centre of this garden, which is bordered by cool green arcades formed of trees clipped into shape, is a small pavillion with groups of cupids surmounting each of its four entrances. This was the summer dining-room of both Louis XV. and Marie-Antoinette. At the end of one of these leafy arcades is the theatre, where the queen and her friends performed alike comedies and operas. Sculptured in high relief above the principal entrance is a cupid grasping a lyre and a crown of laurel, with torches, trumpets, and rolls of music lying at his feet. The interior decorations of the theatre are white and gold; the orchestra stalls and fronts of the boxes are covered with blue velvet, the panels being decorated with cupids suspending garlands of flowers. On either side of the stage two gilded nymphs gracefully twist themselves into candelabra, and above the curtain two other nymphs support the escutcheon of Marie-Antoinette.

At the back and to the right of the little palace is the queen's production, the English garden as it is called, laid out with an absence of formality which almost rivals the productions of Nature's self. The waters apparently wind according to their own

fancy, the trees and shrubs seem to have been sown at the will of the wind. Nearly a thousand varieties of trees, some among them being most rare, join their shade and mingle the different tints of their leaves, which vary from the lightest and deepest greens to dark purple and cherry red. The flowers appear to have been planted at hazard ; the ground rises and falls at its will ; paths wind and go out of the way with provoking pertinacity ; stones have been converted into rocks, and small patches of grass made to resemble meadows.

From a hillock in the midst of a thicket of roses, jasmine, and myrtle, rises a belvidere, from whence the queen was accustomed to take in a view of the whole of her domain. This octangular pavilion, with its four windows and its four doors, and its eight sphinxes crouching upon the steps, has repeated eight times over, in figures upon its skirtings and in emblems over its entrances, the allegory of the four seasons, carved by perhaps the cleverest chisel of the century. The interior is paved with coloured marbles, and coloured arabesques run along its walls, with more bows and arrows and quivers, more bouquets and garlands of flowers and musical instruments, together with cameos and cages hanging from ribbons, and little monkeys and squirrels that scratch the sides of a crystal vase or play with the fishes. In the centre of the pavilion, a table, from which hang three rings, rests upon three claws of gilt bronze ; this is the table at which Marie-Antoinette breakfasted, for this belvidere was her morning *salle-à-manger*.

From here she could overlook her grotto and the group of artificial rocks ; the waterfall, and the trembling bridge thrown across the little torrent ; the lake, and, under the shade of the shrubs, the embarking and landing-places, with the galley dotted all over with *fleurs-de-lis* ; the temple of love open to all the winds, with its statue, by Bouchardon, of Cupid trying to trim for himself a bow out of the massive club of Hercules ; the groves that skirt the river's bank ; and, finally, at the most remote part of the garden—the background, so to speak, of the picture—the hamlet where Marie-Antoinette had the king disguised as a miller, and the Count de Provence as a schoolmaster. Here are the little houses of the village nestled together like members of one family. The queen's is the prettiest of them all, for it has vases filled with flowers, and



grape-vines in front of it. On the opposite side of the lake, and near to the water's edge, is the white marble dairy, with its four goat's-head fountains, and close beside it, and near to a weeping-willow planted by the queen's own hand, is the tower of Marlborough, so called from the nursery song which the young dauphin's *bonne* used to sing to him. Nothing is wanting to this pretty village of the stage, neither the curé's house nor that of the bailiff; nor the mill, with its wheel which actually turns; neither the farmhouse, with the stone troughs for the cattle, and the little barns to store away the corn; nor the thatched roofs, the wooden balconies, the little diamond-paned windows, and the flights of steps at the sides of the cottages. Marie-Antoinette and Hubert Robert, the painter, had thought of everything, even of painting rents in the stone work, cracks in the plaster, with here and there beams and bricks jutting out of place, as if time would not wither with sufficient rapidity this pleasantry of a queen.<sup>1</sup>

Marie-Antoinette put aside all regal authority at the Trianon. Here she was no longer queen, but merely the mistress of the establishment, which was like an ordinary country-house, with its small retinue of servants and all its unrestrained habits. When the queen entered the *salon*, the ladies neither quitted the piano nor their embroidery-frames, nor the men their games at billiards or backgammon. The king would come to Trianon on foot, and unattended. The queen's guests arrived at two o'clock to dinner, and returned to Versailles at midnight. Marie-Antoinette's occupations and amusements were exclusively those of a country life. Attired in a white muslin dress, a lace shawl, and a straw hat, she would run about the gardens, or visit her farm, where she would take her guests to drink her milk and eat her new-laid eggs; or she would conduct the king to a summer-house, where he could read his book undisturbed until she summoned him to a lunch on the grass; after which she would amuse herself by watching the milking of her cows, or with fishing in the lake, or, seated on a rustic seat, would occupy herself by winding up the distaff of some young villager. Now and then she would give some grand

<sup>1</sup> "Histoire de Marie-Antoinette," par E. et J. de Goncourt, to which interesting work we are indebted for the larger portion of the present chapter.

ball, to which all the courtiers from Versailles would be invited, when dancing would go on under a large tent on the lawn in the day-time until the sun set, and at night-time almost until it rose again.

All this must have been a great relief from Versailles and Marly and the troop of intriguing courtiers that migrated backwards and forwards according as royalty pitched its tent at one château or the other. There was something too morally foul in the atmosphere of both these places. Most of the evenings not given up to dancing were spent at play, which some letters of court gossip of the time characteristically describe as being "murderous." The Count d'Artois, after losing two million francs, was exiled by the king to Fontainebleau. On one occasion a certain M. de Chalabre lost as much as 42,000 louis at a sitting, and being without sufficient ready cash to discharge the whole of his obligations, had to hand over debts due to him from the Countesses de Provence and d'Artois, for fifty thousand and twenty-five thousand crowns respectively. The queen, who was a winner of 7000 louis of poor Chalabre's money, sent the next day, we are told, for Mdle. Bertin, her milliner, and paid her account. Among the persons of rank and position admitted to these assemblies there seem to have been both sharpers and pickpockets, for on one occasion a rouleau of fifty counterfeit louis was placed on a card by M. du Luc d'Andilly, an ex-mousquetaire, and son of Count du Luc of Picardy. On the cheat being discovered, the king ordered the culprit to be degraded from his nobility and declared incapable of serving him in future. At another time, Count Arthur Dillon, one of the queen's intimate friends, had his pocket picked of his purse filled with bank notes. It was suggested that everybody in the *salon*—some forty in number—should be searched, but nothing was done, and the count never saw his purse again.<sup>1</sup>

Private theatricals were at this time in great favour with the queen, whose *Trianon troupe* comprised the Count d'Artois, who is said to have danced passably well on the tight rope, but only acted in a manner that was just bearable,<sup>2</sup> M. de Vaudreuil, M.

<sup>1</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. i. pp. 238, 330.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. vol. i. p. 315.

d'Adhémar, the Duke and Duchess de Guiche, the Countess Diane de Polignac, and M. de Crussol: occasionally the Baron de Besenval, the Countess de Polastron, and Counts Esterhazy and de Coigny had parts assigned them. The Count de Provence and his wife considered these diversions beneath their rank, and the king, moreover, disapproved of them. Out of politeness to the queen, he was now and then present at the representations, when he habitually hissed the actors. On one occasion, when the "Devin du Village" was being played, and the queen was singing an air with more than her accustomed taste, all at once a whistle was heard from the back of one of the boxes. Marie-Antoinette soon perceived that it was from the king himself that this interruption proceeded. Advancing to the footlights, she bowed profoundly, and said, with a smile: "Sir, if you are dissatisfied with the performers you can leave, and your money will be returned to you."<sup>1</sup> She then resumed her song, which she was permitted to finish without further interruption. Beaumarchais' comedy of the "Barbier de Séville," for which, Madame Campan tells us, Marie-Antoinette was studying her part at the time she made the disclosure to her of the conversation she had had with Böhmer respecting the Necklace, was the last piece performed by this aristocratic *troupe*. It was played on the 19th of August, 1785, the very day on which the Countess de la Motte was lodged in the Bastille.

<sup>1</sup> "Les derniers jours de Trianon," par M. Capefigue, p. 84.



## XXVII.

1785.

CALUMNIES AGAINST THE QUEEN.—HER ANIMOSITY AGAINST THE  
CARDINAL DE ROHAN.

From the day she became queen, to the very hour of her death, and even after the grave had closed over her headless corse, the unhappy Marie-Antoinette was fated to be the victim of calumny. Her youthful levity was magnified into natural vice. Her most innocent amusements were made the objects of dark suspicion. Her friendships were so many criminal attachments. From Marly to Versailles, and from Versailles to Marly, slander pursued her. It penetrated the groves of Trianon, and insinuated that secret orgies, rivalling those of the "Parc aux cerfs," were carried on in this now favourite retreat. Indecent pamphlets referring to her, written by hireling scribes, were circulated all over France. Libels against her were even forged in the police bureau. Scandalous songs were thrown at the king's feet, in the "Œil-de-Bœuf." Scandalous libels were placed under his dinner-napkin. Courtiers repeated the last foul epigram, the last lying report against the queen, in the royal ante-chambers, whispered it and chuckled over it even in the queen's presence; carried it from Versailles or Marly, post haste to Paris, to the different hostile *salons*, to the green-rooms of the theatre and the opera, and to the *cafés*, thence to be disseminated all over the capital, even to the *halles*; carried it to their country châteaux, and laughed over it at their dinner-tables, whence it spread among their tenantry and the inhabitants of the adjacent towns :

" And they who told it added something new,  
And they who heard it made enlargement too,  
In ev'ry ear it spread, on every tongue it grew."

Fancy what a perfect fund of scandal this affair of the Necklace, enveloped as it was at first in such an impenetrable mystery, provided for these despicable minds ! What an arsenal for defamation

and calumny it furnished to the avowed enemies of Marie-Antoinette! The Orléans faction professed to look upon it as a state crime, pretending to believe that the real culprit was the queen, who had secured the Necklace through the medium of the cardinal, he having been her dupe in the first instance, and afterwards her victim. They gave out, through their herd of itinerant agents—men without characters, without homes, without bread, without settled occupations, fitted only for scandalous adventures, and living only by dishonourable expedients—that it was Marie-Antoinette herself, “*la louve Autrichienne*,” as they styled her, who had met the grand almoner in the park of Versailles at midnight; that it was she who had heard his exculpation, and had listened to his new promises of fealty, which had been sealed by embraces and the gift of a rose; and further, that she had subsequently granted him several secret interviews at the Little Trianon. On this false basis they raised their broad superstructure of defamation, and pursued the queen with every species of malignant slander in pasquinades, epigrams, and songs,<sup>1</sup> “unfit for print or pen, the brutality of which nothing can exceed; but which, nevertheless, found believers—increase of believers, in the public exasperation—and did the queen, say all her historians, incalculable damage,”<sup>2</sup> until finally the hideous fabrications culminated in the epithet of Messalina, hurled at her by the furies of the *halles* on her way to the guillotine.

To this body of antagonists must be added those retailers of gossip and small talk who, in a country like France, where most men are mixed up in intrigues, (and no reputation is too sacred for the inuendo, the smart sally, and the *bon-mot*,) delight and revel in scandals enveloped in some degree of mystery. There was certainly no lack of mystery in the affair of the Necklace, and these quick-witted individuals, thinking only of the entangled web offered them to unravel, displayed their ingenuity in suggesting clue after clue, regardless as to whether this or that clever explanation which they put forward compromised the queen or no, for the old loyal feeling of the nation was by this time utterly dead.

<sup>1</sup> M. de Lescure, in his “*La Vraie Marie-Antoinette*,” brings forward evidence of the existence of a private printing press in the cellars of the Palais Royal, at which these foul libels were struck off.

<sup>2</sup> “*Carlyle’s Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*,” vol. iv. p. 36, *note*.

The lower classes of society in France had for some time past been brought to believe, and not without reason, that kings and queens were their natural enemies; that they despised, if they did not hate, their poorer subjects, whom they only valued as so much food for powder, or for what they could furnish to the exchequer through the hard extortion of the tax-gatherer. Marie-Antoinette was deservedly blamed for her thoughtless acquisition of the château of St. Cloud, at an outlay of six million francs, at this particular period when several bad harvests had imposed new hardships on the people; when provisions were frightfully scarce, prices correspondingly high, and tillage employment, save as "statute labour," hardly to be had. The peasants in certain parts had even been reduced to live "on meal, husks, and boiled grass." In the towns, the distress, if not so great, was still considerable, and large numbers of men were out of work. Crowds of idlers, as a matter of course, filled the cafés and cabarets—men with fermenting minds, and only too ready to believe any new calumny against the objects of their disaffection, and to lend their busy tongues to circulate the foulest slanders through the land. Upon the quick fancies of these thoughtless men, who never paused to examine what they heard, the enemies of Marie-Antoinette, who went about inflaming the discontented, encouraging the angry, and imposing on the thoughtless and the credulous, made a lasting and fatal impression.

Whilst the numerous enemies of the queen were thus at work turning the Necklace scandal to the best account, the Baron de Breteuil, whose hatred of the cardinal knew no bounds, was straining every nerve to convert it into an instrument for the effectual ruin of his enemy. The Abbé Georgel assures us that this animosity went so far as to induce the minister to promise Böhmer—who, according to some accounts, had in the first instance been arrested in conjunction with Saint-James and others on suspicion of being privy to the abuse of the queen's name<sup>1</sup>—full payment for the Necklace if he would aggravate his evidence against the cardinal. De Breteuil also sent emissaries to the Bastille, to communicate with Madame de la Motte, offering to save her if she would furnish sufficient proof to inculpate his old enemy.

<sup>1</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette, la Cour et la Ville," vol. i. p. 587



Beugnot, at this period a rising young barrister of four-and-twenty, understood to be an intimate acquaintance of the De la Mottes, and known to have been the person last in company with the countess previous to her arrest, fully expected to be sent to join her in the Bastille. The Baron de Breteuil, however, far from ordering Beugnot's arrest, instructed M. de Crosne,—recently appointed lieutenant of police in place of M. Lenoir, promoted to the presidency of the administration of finances—to send privately for the young barrister, when, playing on his vanity, he recommended him to take the countess's brief, as the trial was certain to attract the eyes of all men, and could hardly fail to push forward a young advocate in his career. But Beugnot, who knew his proposed client too well, declined to avail himself of the opportunity. “The next day,” observes he, “I received a new message from M. de Crosne, which involved another visit on my part. The lieutenant of police gave me an opened letter of Madame de la Motte's, who, not understanding the difficulties which I felt in charging myself with her defence, begged me to come and see her. M. de Crosne backed up her request with some pressing solicitations of his own; then judging from my obstinate refusal, or possibly from something that Madame de la Motte had said to him, that I thought there was danger attached to the post proposed to me, he sought to reassure me on this point, and urged me to see the Baron de Breteuil. I declined. ‘I could say nothing to the minister,’ I remarked, ‘which I had not already said to him, neither would the former obtain from me what I had refused to the lieutenant of police.’ M. de Crosne insisted still more strongly, and gave me to understand that more condescension on my part to the views of the authorities would be neither prejudicial to my professional advancement nor to my fortune; his favourite refrain always being—‘See the Baron de Breteuil.’ I gave M. de Crosne to understand that I should not have that honour, since I did not see to what it could lead, and I left him, after obtaining permission to address to him a letter in reply to the one he had delivered to me.

“When recalling this scene, I can scarcely doubt the nature of the political interest which the Baron de Breteuil took in Madame de la Motte. He knew from one of his confidential emissaries, with whom I had been conversing, that I treated the stealing of the

Necklace as comparatively a pitiful incident ; but that I regarded the scene in the park almost in the light of a capital crime. This was apparently in precise accordance with his own views, and made him anxious that Madame de la Motte's counsel should share to the fullest extent in his opinions. In replying to the countess's letter, I grounded my refusal on my want of talent and experience for so grave a business, and I added, that it would be useless for her to insist further, as my refusal being dictated to me by my conscience, nothing she could urge would induce me to revoke it.<sup>1</sup>

On her side, Marie-Antoinette, deeply and very naturally incensed against the Prince de Rohan, and, truth to tell, quite as eager for his destruction as the minister Breteuil, refused likewise to look elsewhere for a culprit. Both she and the king believed the grand almoner to be guilty of the peculation of the Necklace, and of an impertinent abuse of the queen's name. They knew he had contracted enormous debts ; they knew, too, that he had been charged with tampering with the funds of a rich hospital, the *Quinze-Vingts*, of which he was treasurer, and that he had hitherto led a most dissolute life. Was he not, therefore, precisely the man who would be likely to perpetrate such a crime ? Already branded in public opinion for an alleged malversation of a million of francs in the matter of the Hospital of the *Quinze-Vingts*, his office of grand almoner, and his dignity as a prince of the Church, could not raise him above suspicion. The aversion first excited in the queen's mind by the cardinal's private letter against her mother, and his injurious representations respecting herself at the court of Vienna, was increased to positive hatred by the description of the scene in the park of Versailles, by the frequent association of her own name with his in people's mouths, as well as by the offensive commentaries provoked by that association. This burning abhorrence, continually fed by fresh reports similar in character to the foregoing, so blinded Marie-Antoinette to the strict rules and rigid formalities of justice, that in her first moments of passion she is said to have demanded the cardinal's life of the king, and the king, moreover, is believed to have promised her that he should not escape the scaffold.

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. pp. 97-8.

## XXVIII.

1785. SEPT.—OCT.

## PREPARATIONS FOR THE TRIAL.—CAPTURE OF THE COUNTERFEIT QUEEN.

THE Cardinal de Rohan, who in the first instance was looked upon as the grand criminal in the Necklace affair, was no sooner in safe keeping than the somewhat difficult question arose what should be done with him. It is true that the queen, in her first moments of anger, urged on by her adviser, the Abbé Vermond, and the cardinal's enemy, the Baron de Breteuil, was for doing swift execution upon the grand almoner ; but fortunately for the latter there were certain tedious forms of law to be gone through before a prince of the holy Roman Church could be consigned to the scaffold. Irresolute Louis XVI. had, of course, no opinion of his own upon the subject, and it is quite certain that much indecision on the subject prevailed among his chief advisers. Phlegmatic M. de Vergennes, though no friend of the queen, seems to have thought it best to hush the matter up, and let the scandal die out if it would, and he well-nigh convinced the king that this would be the proper course to pursue. While the affair was under discussion, Louis XVI. wrote to M. de Vergennes as follows :

“I thank you, sir, for your new interview with M. de Breteuil. I have weighed your reasons ; come to-morrow before mass, and I will hear you upon this subject once more. It is necessary that a decision should be arrived at, so as to end with this intrigue of a needy man, who has so scandalously compromised the queen, and who, in order to clear himself, has no other recourse than to allege his connection with an adventuress of the worst kind. He dis-



honours his ecclesiastical character. Being a cardinal, he is none the less a subject of my crown."<sup>1</sup>

This interview seems to have resulted in a proposal to the cardinal, offering him the option of throwing himself upon the clemency of the king, or of being arraigned before the parliament, not doubting that he would be only too ready to accept the first of these two alternatives. The cardinal, however, decided upon consulting his friends and advocates; and among the latter were two of the ablest members of the Paris bar, the one, M. Target, robust of brain and body, pompous in speech, learned as intense study could render him, versed in the treasures of literature, fiery, impetuous, an athlete redoubtable to all,<sup>2</sup> who, as member of the National Assembly, subsequently busied himself a good deal in framing the constitution, and was in after years applied to to undertake the defence of Louis XVI. himself—a duty which he declined on the plea that he was getting old; the other, M. Tronchet, who, though ten years older than Target, did undertake to defend the king, although he knew he was engaging in a hopeless cause—Tronchet, whose natural phlegm disposed him to listen with attention, and whom a healthy judgment directed aright even in the most difficult matters.<sup>3</sup> The cardinal's friends were all of them in favour of the parliament; while his advocates were divided in opinion. Nevertheless, by the parliament he decided he would be judged, and made known his election to the king in the following terms:

"Sire,—I respectfully thank your majesty for the alternative you have been pleased to offer me. I have no hesitation in preferring the parliament, as affording me the surest way of unmasking the intrigue of which I am the victim, and of proving my innocence before the world."<sup>4</sup>

On receiving this reply, and exactly three weeks after the cardinal's arrest, the king issued his royal letters patent, addressed

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished autograph letter of Louis XVI. in the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches.

<sup>2</sup> "Souvenirs de M. Berryer, doyen des avocats de Paris, de 1774 à 1838," vol. ii. p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol. ii. p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> "Mémoires pour servir," etc., par l'Abbé Georgel, vol. ii. p. 127.

to the Parliament of Paris, formally apprising it of the great fraud that had been committed in the queen's name, and of the arrest of the supposed authors of it, and requiring the parliament to investigate and judge the affair. The cardinal having selected the parliament as the tribunal before which he desired to be arraigned, now protested, in his character of bishop and prince of the holy Roman Church, in a somewhat mild way, against the competency of the judges he had himself chosen, and humbly besought the parliament that he might be tried by an ecclesiastical tribunal, composed of his peers or brethren in the episcopacy, in accordance with the recognised rights and privileges of the Catholic Church. This request being refused, the cardinal had no option but to accept the tribunal named by the king. On the pope hearing of this, he summoned a consistory, which unanimously declared that the Cardinal de Rohan had acted contrary to his dignity as a member of the sacred college in recognizing the authority of the parliament, and at once directed his ecclesiastical suspension for a period of six months, at the end of which time, in the event of his persisting in his course, he was to be struck off the list of cardinals.<sup>1</sup> In this dilemma, the Abbé Lemoine was despatched to Rome by the cardinal's friends, and succeeded in proving to the pope that the Prince de Rohan had made the protests which his dignity required, though without avail, and that he only accepted a secular tribunal because he was compelled to subscribe to the will of the king. The interdict was thereupon removed, and the cardinal reinstated in all his functions.

While these formalities were being discussed, and the affair still partook of the character of a political contest between the adherents and friends of the house of Rohan united with the enemies of Marie-Antoinette on the one hand, and the court and government and partizans of the crown on the other;—while people were eagerly devouring the statements circulated on behalf of the accused, and were now blaming, now seeking to exculpate the cardinal, and were either attacking or sympathising with Madame de la Motte, and ridiculing Cagliostro,—an individual whom no one was particularly regarding, was silently, but none the less

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoires pour servir,” etc., par l'Abbé Georgel, vol. ii. p. 138, *et seq.*

earnestly, labouring to overthrow the cold calculations of political animosity, and dissolve all those dreams of private vengeance of which the Prince de Rohan was the object. This was the Abbé Georgel, the cardinal's vicar-general, who had taken upon himself the task of disentangling the threads of this complicated affair. With the sanction of the grand almoner, he went first of all to the jewellers, and arranged with them that they should receive payment for the Necklace in full, with all interest then due or that might hereafter accrue, and he gave them as security an assignment under the cardinal's hand, of the revenues of the Abbey of St. Waast, to the amount of three hundred thousand livres per annum. Thus this able man of business, by a single wrench, so to speak, drew out the most envenomed shaft, converting the jewellers from enemies, if not into friends, at any rate into very harmless antagonists. The cardinal's other creditors, whose claims amounted to nearly two millions of livres, on hearing of this assignment, became clamorous, and had also to be successfully arranged with.<sup>1</sup>

The abbé directed his attention to the state prosecution, in order to see whether it could not be diverted from the cardinal, the actual victim of the fraud, to the countess and her confederates, the perpetrators of it. Night and day, with the pertinacity of the true Jesuit, did the Abbé Georgel pursue his plan; now visiting the Bastille and interrogating the cardinal next examining his friends, his visitors, and his domestics, and then again the different individuals to whom these referred him, and taking notes of every scrap of information he obtained. For many weeks his industry seemed to yield him no result, for as yet he was without anything like a positive clue. At length, from hints given him by the Abbé de Juncker, he tracked out Father Loth, one of the countess's minor instruments, and so far privy to, if not an actual accomplice in, her misdeeds as to judge it prudent on his part to keep entirely in the background until the Necklace inquiry was brought to a close.<sup>2</sup> For a long time he was a most unwilling witness, but eventually the Abbé Georgel skilfully extracted from him all that

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires pour servir," etc., par l'Abbé Georgel, vol. ii. p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. ii. p. 145.



he knew, and learned for the first time the names of Mademoiselle d'Oliva and of Rétaux de Villette, and the *rôles* they had been engaged to play. The announcement of this discovery demolished in a moment the subtle political intrigue, the object of which had been to send the Cardinal de Rohan to the scaffold.

Encouraged by this stroke of good fortune, the abbé proceeded to track the fugitives, for Mademoiselle d'Oliva, and Rétaux de Villette, had both turned their backs upon Paris soon after the countess's arrest. Through the good offices of the Count de Vergennes, who prevailed on the king to consent to a demand being made in his name, for the surrender of the "*jolie demoiselle*" of the Palais Royal she was arrested at Brussels on the 16th of October in the middle of the night by the sub-lieutenant of police, three civic officers, a greffier, and some half-dozen of the town guard—rather a formidable force to take an unprotected female of four-and-twenty into custody. It is supposed to have been owing to the exertions of Marie-Antoinette's sister, the Duchess of Saxe-Teschen, then *gouvernante* of the Austrian Netherlands, that the Demoiselle d'Oliva and her lover, a certain M. de Beausire, formerly attached to the household of the Count d'Artois, were routed out. In a letter of the queen's, written to her sister, she says, "Your government, I am certain, will second me in searching for the woman who played the part in the garden scene, and who has taken refuge with you."<sup>1</sup> D'Oliva was at once brought to Paris, and lodged in the Bastille. She, however, knew nothing beyond what related to the nocturnal scene in the park of Versailles, when she had been tricked out to play the part of queen.

Yet what Mademoiselle d'Oliva did know she told with frankness and with an air of perfect truth. A memorial, ostensibly on her behalf, was brought out by the indefatigable abbé, containing the announcement of the important fact, now proved beyond a doubt, that it was the humble individual now in custody, and not the Queen of France, who took part in the famous interview which had given rise to so much scandal. The story was so clear, the incident so fully explained, that the malice of ten thousand

<sup>1</sup> "Correspondance Inédite de Marie-Antoinette," par Comte P. Vogt d'Hunolstein, p. 133. It should be mentioned that the majority of the letters in this collection are considered to be of doubtful authenticity.

tongues was in a moment deprived of its nutriment, and the great figure of Marie-Antoinette was suddenly withdrawn from the scene—too late, alas! for her subsequent reputation,—while the innocence of the cardinal was everywhere beginning to be felt.

Before D'Oliva's memorial made its appearance, however, and indeed, before the counterfeit queen's capture, Madame de la Motte had been engaged in furnishing her counsel with the materials for a memorial on her own behalf, which was made public early in November, when, in all probability, she had not heard of D'Oliva's arrest. This formed number one of that series of lying "*Mémoires*" issued by the countess, which, in their endeavour to explain away certain new evidence that had come to light, contradicted former statements made by her, contradicted each other, and at times contradicted themselves. The countess avers that so great was the excitement on the occasion of the issue of her first memorial, that M. Doillot, her advocate, was obliged to have a guard at his house during the distribution of the copies, six thousand of which were sold in the course of a day or two.<sup>1</sup>

The countess, who had been in the Bastille for several months, feeling by no means dissatisfied with the turn her case was apparently taking, and contenting herself with denying all knowledge of the Necklace, experienced a certain degree of disquiet on learning of the arrest of Mademoiselle d'Oliva; still, her fertile brain was soon at work to concoct some kind of explanation of the circumstances to which this new witness might be expected to depose. Besides, if it came to the worst, could she not fall back upon her system of general denial? and was not D'Oliva a person of notoriously bad character, whose word would weigh as nothing against that of a descendant of the house of Valois? It must have been about this time that she would have also heard from her counsel of the rumours afloat respecting the depositions which Carbonnières, intendant of the cardinal's household, had procured in England from the jewellers Gray and Jefferys, and have seen how necessary it was that the more complete story which she would now be constrained to tell should fit in all its parts with this new and unexpected evidence. It was more than ever requisite that

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 426.

she should be wakeful, since she had heard, like the rest of the world, that the prosecution would be a contest between the queen and the Baron de Breteuil on the one hand, and the Prince de Rohan and his powerful partisans on the other; and there are strong reasons for believing that the home secretary and other enemies of the cardinal had insinuated to her, through various channels, that if she could only produce good evidence against the grand almoner, no other victim would be required. If we can believe her own statement, that "mercenary hireling," as she calls him, Commissary Chénon, "made use of every argument to exasperate me against the cardinal," and wound up by saying, "He indeed may lay all manner of things to your charge, but make yourself easy, we shall take care to saddle him with everything."



## XXIX.

1786. JAN.

## THE TRIAL : EXAMINATION OF THE ACCUSED.

At length, after the law had exhausted its customary period of delay, the examination of the accused commenced. The Cardinal de Rohan was first questioned, and told his story much the same as the reader has already gathered it from the preceding pages. Mademoiselle d'Oliva was next examined, and simply confirmed all that she had stated in her published memorial, from which we have quoted the chief passages. Pecuniary embarrassment, she said, was the sole reason of her leaving Paris within a few weeks of the time that Madame de la Motte was arrested, for it was then that her creditors began to press her for payment of their claims. She went to Brussels by the recommendation of a person who lived in the same house that she did, and whom she knew to be a native of that place. It was now the countess's turn, for as yet Rétaux de Villette had proved more than a match for the sleuth-hounds of the Abbé Georgel, and was still skulking in some safe retreat. As for Cagliostro, his examination was to be deferred until after the countess's had been brought to a close.

Madame de la Motte commenced by detailing the chief incidents in her career, from the time she was taken notice of by the Marchioness de Boulainvilliers until the moment of her first introduction to the Cardinal de Rohan, with something like a regard for truth. When questioned respecting her pretended intimacy with the queen, she said she had not the honour of being known to her, and denied ever having represented that she had access to her ; averred that she had never shown any letters purporting to be from her majesty ; that she had never been honoured with letters from her, and consequently could not have shown any such letters.

With regard to Mademoiselle d'Oliva, the countess stated that all she knew of her arose from casually meeting her in the Palais Royal,

when she learnt from her that her husband, who was a friend of Monsieur de Choiseul, had left her, and gone to America. Compassionating her lonely condition, and finding her to be, to all appearances, a well-conducted young person, she had asked her to her house, "and had taken her on one occasion to Versailles, where she stayed with her for three days." When asked if she had not told D'Oliva that she was a lady of the court, on terms of close intimacy with the queen, by whom she was charged to find a person who would render her majesty some service, for which a reward of fifteen thousand francs would be given, she ridiculed the entire affair. She maintained it to be an invention on the part of the cardinal and Father Loth, who both knew of the unpleasantness that had arisen between her husband and herself with regard to the woman D'Oliva, whom she afterwards found by her behaviour to be anything but the respectable person she represented herself, being, in fact, a common courtesan who had been receiving the visits of Count de la Motte for some time past. She admitted that D'Oliva walked in the park of Versailles with her husband and Villette, on some evening in July of the year 1784, while she was promenading with the Cardinal de Rohan, but she utterly denied the whole story of dressing her up to personate the queen, and then conducting her to the park and instructing her what she was to say on being addressed by a great personage to whom she was to hand a letter and a rose. The countess protested that she felt highly indignant at the mere suggestion of these "numerous falsehoods," these "horrible reports;" that "the entire thing was most absurd, and nothing but a foolish and incredible fable, most wretchedly concocted by its author, the Prince de Rohan." She said, of course it was false that she had ever told D'Oliva that the queen was pleased at the way in which she had acquitted herself, or that she had read a letter to her, purporting to be from the queen, saying the same thing; and as for having given D'Oliva one thousand or three thousand livres, or any money whatever, after this affair, she had certainly done nothing of the kind.

When asked if she had obtained from the Cardinal de Rohan two sums of 50,000 livres and 100,000 livres, in the months of August and November, 1784, in the queen's name, she simply ridiculed the suggestion, and pertinently asked, was it likely the cardinal would

have been so mad as to have handed over to her such considerable amounts as these without receiving orders perfectly well known to have come from the queen, or, at any rate, without taking some kind of acknowledgment from her for them?

On being questioned with respect to the Necklace, the countess denied having had anything whatever to do with its purchase. She said she only saw the jewellers once before it was sold to the cardinal, on which occasion she peremptorily declined meddling in the affair. When asked if she had carried or had shown to the cardinal a letter purporting to be from the queen, wherein the queen expressed a wish to possess the Necklace, she ingeniously observed, that if it were intended to be suggested that she had been the bearer of any such letter as that alluded to, she desired the letter might be produced, for it was the cardinal's duty to have preserved a document of such importance. She admitted having casually spoken to the cardinal about the Necklace the day after the jewellers had shown it to her, but the cardinal appeared to pay no attention to what she said, although he afterwards sent to her for the jewellers' address. She certainly showed his note to Böhmer and Bassenge, but never said or hinted to them that he was acting on behalf of the queen, whose name was never once mentioned. With regard to the actual purchase of the Necklace she knew positively nothing until several days afterwards, when the cardinal told her that he had bought it for the queen.

As to the contract, the countess declared it had not been given to her to show to the queen, and consequently she could not have returned it to the cardinal "approved" and signed. When the contract was first shown to her she immediately recognised the body of it as being in the cardinal's handwriting, but she did not know the writing of the signature: she positively denied having written it herself, or that it had been signed by any person she knew.<sup>1</sup>

In reply to further questions, Madame de la Motte stated that she did not know when the Necklace was handed over, and could

<sup>1</sup> In the French State paper office a minute description is preserved of the documents, put in on behalf of the prosecution in the "*Procès du Collier*." An epitome of this will be found in the appendix to the present volume.



not say whether she saw the cardinal at Versailles on the 1st of February, 1785, although she saw him most days when he was there. She had no hesitation in declaring the story about the cardinal bringing the Necklace to her house, and the casket being handed over to a person who came with a note from the queen, to be absolutely false from beginning to end. The countess indignantly denied ever having had the Necklace in her possession, or having had it taken to pieces; but, knowing well enough that there was evidence forthcoming of her and her husband having sold some of the diamonds forming part of it, she endeavoured to make her admission fit, as it were, with the evidence she thought likely to be brought forward. She maintained, however, that she was merely acting as agent for the cardinal, who, she said, sent her first of all twenty-two diamonds in a little box, with a note bidding her sell them as soon as she could. Subsequently he sent her a second box, containing a number of small diamonds which she was likewise to dispose of. The first parcel of diamonds Vilette, she said, endeavoured to sell, but was unsuccessful, and they were eventually sold to the jeweller Paris for fifteen thousand livres, by recommendation of Monsieur Filleul,<sup>1</sup> advocate of Bar-sur-Aube, and this amount she duly remitted to the cardinal, who afterwards sent her sixteen other diamonds, which she sold to the same person for sixteen thousand livres, and forwarded the amount to the cardinal in the early part of May. The small diamonds, she said, she sold to Regnier, together with one of larger size which the cardinal had given her, for the sum of five thousand five hundred and forty francs. The two diamond rings which, it will be remembered, were set by Regnier, were set, she said, for the cardinal, and she asserted the same with respect to a *bonbonnière* which Regnier had encircled with diamonds for the count.

During the same month, while the Cardinal de Rohan was at Saverne, she said, one Carbonnières, a member of the cardinal's household, came to her in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, at six o'clock in the morning, and inquired if it would be possible for her to undertake a journey to Saverne in four days' time, some urgent business which he had in hand preventing him from going himself.

<sup>1</sup> This name occurs as Filliau in the written record of the proceedings, preserved in the National Archives.

He had something of great value and importance to transmit to the cardinal, who, he knew, would be very much pleased with her if she but did what he asked. At the expiration of the four days, Carbonnières, she said, brought her a large sealed packet, and lent her his walking-cane, and directed the coachman to proceed by the Porte St. Martin as far as Pantin, the first stage. On reaching Saverne she put up at an inn, and apprised the cardinal of her arrival, whereupon he sent over one of his own carriages to fetch her. Immediately she saw the cardinal she gave him the sealed packet, and he asked her to stay and dine with him, but as she was dressed in man's clothes she was obliged to decline. The cardinal, after thanking her for the trouble she had been at on his account, then made her a present of the *bonbonnière* which Regnier had mounted with diamonds for him. "Open it," he said, "and you will find something." She did as directed, and saw it was full of unset diamonds. On leaving the cardinal intrusted her with a packet of letters for Carbonnières, which, on her arrival at Paris, she duly forwarded to the Hôtel de Strasbourg, together with the walking-cane which had been lent to her.

At this point of her examination the countess essayed what she thought would prove a grand *coup*, which, bewildering and astonishing her judges, would make her innocence apparent with due melodramatic effect. She stated that in the month of March of the year before she went, accompanied by her niece, a little girl of ten or twelve years of age, daughter of Madame de la Tour, to the Hôtel de Strasbourg to meet that great, that extraordinary man, as the cardinal invariably called him, the Count de Cagliostro, whom she had seen at Strasbourg four years previously, and who was on the present occasion to exhibit some of his marvellous performances. She and her niece were conducted to the cardinal's sleeping apartment, which was lighted up with twenty or thirty candles, when Count Cagliostro, calling her niece to him, took her upon his knee, and made her promise never to reveal to any one what she was about to see. He then dressed her out with a blue, green, and black ribbon, and also a white ribbon, to which was attached a cross and a star, and put on her a white apron covered over with different orders, and ornamented with beautiful silver lace. He next placed his naked sword upon her

head, and pronounced these words: "I command thee, in the name of the Great Cofte and of the angels Michael and Raphael to show me what I shall presently tell thee;" and, taking her niece by the hand, he led her behind a screen where there was a table and a bottle of very clear water, on which he made her place her hand. The count then passed to the other side of the screen, where Madame de la Motte and the cardinal were seated, and commanded them to keep strict silence. He then pronounced certain words, of the meaning of which she understood nothing—but which the cardinal told her were to drive away the evil spirit—and said to her niece: "Say, 'I command thee to make me see all that I desire.' Strike! What dost thou see? Hold thy hand always upon the bottle. What dost thou see?" "Nothing, monsieur." "Strike again. Strike! strike! What dost thou see? Dost thou not see a woman dressed in white, with a long fair face?" "Yes, monsieur." "Who is it? Dost thou not see the queen? Dost thou know her?" "Yes, monsieur; it is the queen." "Say again, 'In the name of the Great Cofte I command thee to show me all that I shall desire.' Strike! What dost thou see, little one? Seest thou not an angel on thy right, who turns towards thee as though to embrace thee? Seest thou?" "Yes, monsieur." "Ah well! embrace him!"

Some days afterwards the Count de Cagliostro, who was not satisfied with this *séance*, at which all had not been made visible that he desired, directed that her niece should be dressed entirely in white, with her hair hanging loosely down, when he recommenced the same ceremony. The cardinal, on this occasion, forced her to go behind the screen, and Cagliostro made her and her niece go upon their knees, after which he said to the latter: "I ordain thee, &c. What seest thou, little one? Look at the point of my sword. Dost thou not see some one kneeling? Who is it? Name them!" "It is my lord cardinal and my aunt." "What does my lord do?" "He takes a crown of six livres from a snuff-box which you hold in your hand." "What further does he do?" "He takes a crown of three livres out of the same box." "What more dost thou see at the point of my sword? Dost thou not see a magnificent palace and gardens?" "Yes, monsieur." "Whom dost thou see there?" "No one, monsieur." "Look again; look



well." "I see nothing, monsieur." Then Cagliostro, finding that she saw nothing, said to the cardinal: "She is too old, she is not pure. I must have another child." To which the cardinal remarked: "I understand, one of those you know well."

Eight days afterwards, Cagliostro went through a similar performance with two young children by turns, and in the following month there was another *séance* at the cardinal's hôtel, when Cagliostro directed a table to be taken to one end of the saloon, and a large number of lighted candles to be placed upon it. He then laid his naked sword, crossing it with a poignard, in the centre, and arranged around it a quantity of medals, and the crosses of Jerusalem and St. Andrew, and commanded the countess to lay her hands upon them, and swear that she would never divulge what she was about to see and hear, and what was going to be proposed to her. Then, turning to the cardinal, Cagliostro said to him: "Prince, go now; go now, prince." They spoke together in a low tone, and the cardinal went to his secretary, which stood by the side of his cabinet, and brought from it a rather large oval-shaped box of white wood, whereupon Cagliostro said to him: "There is still another; bring it forth." On opening these boxes they were both found to be full of diamonds, and the cardinal then said to her: "Will your husband go to England if I send him? I will give him two thousand crowns, which he can place with some banker here for a draft upon London." Whereupon she asked the cardinal the name of this banker and his address, to which he replied: "It is Bergaud (Perregaux), Rue du Sentier; he is my ordinary banker. Here, take the diamonds; I will settle the price. Impress upon your husband on no account to sell them without first of all having them set, and tell him he must not bring any unset ones back with him."

The count went to England as the cardinal had suggested, and shortly afterwards the cardinal said to her, "Write to your husband to send me what money he has received, for I have some pressing payments to make. You remember seeing a lady with me during Holy week. I have promised her five hundred thousand livres. She is a German, and is about to marry a gentleman of Versailles so as to legitimatise a child of which I am the father." On being written to, her husband hastened home again, bringing with him

drafts upon Bergaud (Perregaux) for 121,000 livres, a medallion set with brilliants valued at one thousand crowns, a pair of girandole earrings valued at two thousand crowns, a diamond pin, and two large diamond rings, which, together with the drafts for one hundred and twenty-one thousand livres, were handed to the cardinal, who returned the earrings, the pin, and the medallion, saying, "Here, keep these for your trouble." She told the cardinal that her husband had left behind him, in England, a quantity of diamonds to be sold or else set, to which the cardinal replied, that he would prefer their being sold, but would see about this on his return from Saverne.<sup>1</sup>

One can very well understand that on the conclusion of this marvellous narrative the sitting of the court was adjourned, and that on the following day Madame de la Motte was asked by her judges what witnesses she could bring forward in support of the extraordinary statements she had made. The countess replied there was only the servant who brought her the first box of diamonds from the cardinal, as the note which accompanied it had been taken possession of by the Prince de Rohan with all his other letters to her, when she was confined under lock and key at the Palais-Cardinal.

On being asked to account for the opulence which she was known to have displayed at the very time that she and her husband were, as she said, selling these diamonds on the cardinal's behalf, she recapitulated various presents of money which she affirmed the cardinal had made her; in addition to which, she said, she had received considerable gifts from the royal princes and princesses and from ministers of the crown. She stated that the diamonds which had been handed to her by the cardinal, including those remaining unsold in England, were of the value of three hundred and seventy-seven thousand livres; nevertheless these did not comprise all that belonged to the Necklace sold to the queen, as the cardinal had given numbers away; and among them, some of the most beautiful to the lady, whom he wanted to marry to a gentleman attached to the suite of the Count de Provence, and others to the Countess de Cagliostro. After having expressly stated that the diamonds she and her husband disposed of did not comprise all

<sup>1</sup> "Premier Interrogatoire de Madame de la Motte."

that belonged to the Necklace sold to the queen, Madame de la Motte maintained, in reply to questions asked her, that she neither knew nor suspected that any of the diamonds sold by them formed any portion of the Necklace in question; otherwise she would have had nothing to do with them, but would have felt it her duty to have warned the jewellers. When her husband, on seeing such a large number of unset stones, asked the cardinal where they came from, the prince replied that they belonged to an old set of jewels which he had no longer any occasion for now that he was getting old. When reminded that it was at this very time Laporte had spoken to her of the jewellers' inquietude at finding the Necklace was not worn by the queen, Madame de la Motte observed, that in this case the jewellers ought to have addressed themselves to the cardinal, particularly as she had warned them to be cautious. She denied that the cardinal had at any time expressed astonishment to her at her majesty not wearing the Necklace; the reverse, indeed, was the fact, it was she who had expressed her astonishment to the cardinal.

The countess, as a matter of course, denied having shown to the cardinal a letter purporting to be from the queen respecting the payment of the sum of seven hundred thousand livres to the jewellers; she also denied having given thirty thousand livres to the cardinal to be handed over to them as interest for the delay in the payment of the instalments. When asked what she borrowed from thirty to forty thousand livres from her notary for at this precise date, she was ready with her answer. It was to oblige the Marchioness de Crussol (the same who went to the guillotine with Madame Elisabeth, the king's sister, when these two poor ladies embraced each other at the foot of the scaffold), who came to her, and told her of the embarrassing position in which the ambassador of Portugal was placed through having pledged her diamonds, which she was unable to redeem, and which would have been sold if Madame de la Motte had not furnished the money to take them out of pawn.

She tried to persuade her judges that the cardinal had called upon her one morning, and complained to her that he had been duped in the affair of the Necklace; that he had shown her a letter which he imagined had come from the queen, containing



these words, "Send by the little countess<sup>1</sup> a sum of money—the amount of which she could not recollect—for these unfortunates. I should be annoyed if they get into trouble." He suspected, however, that the letter was not in the queen's handwriting, and that he had been made a dupe of. He paced up and down the room exclaiming, "Has she deceived me, this little countess? has she deceived me? Oh, no! I know Madame de Cagliostro too well; she is not capable of this."

On being asked if she knew a certain Dame de Courville, she replied that she had seen her with the cardinal in holy week the year previous, and that she knew her as a neighbour living within a few doors of her own house. She then proceeded to say that this was the same lady the cardinal desired to marry to a gentleman belonging to the suite of the Count de Provence, and to whom he had promised to give five hundred thousand livres. When asked if she knew an individual named Augeard<sup>2</sup> or one Bette d'Etienville, or one Marsilly, a counsellor, she replied that she knew none of those persons. This concluded the countess's first examination, which lasted from the 20th to the 26th of January, an entire week, and of which we have given all the chief points to enable the reader to see the scope and power of Madame de la Motte's inventive faculties, and her proficiency in the arts of falsehood and deceit.

It was now Cagliostro's turn to be examined. In answer to questions put to him, he said that he was a professor of medicine, of noble birth, and had travelled largely in Asia and Africa, as well as Europe, most of the chief cities of which he had visited. He was intimately acquainted with the Prince de Rohan, and since his (the count's) arrival in Paris, on the 30th of January in the past year, had been in the habit of seeing him generally three or four times a week. During this period the prince and his friends had occasionally dined with him at his house in the Rue Saint-Claude. The Necklace, respecting which so much had been said, was purchased before this time. He remembered the cardinal expressing certain doubts to him with regard to the genuineness of

<sup>1</sup> Cagliostro's wife was known by this designation.

<sup>2</sup> This was an alias of Rétaux de Villette's. See *post*, p. 243.

the signature affixed to the contract, when he, sharing in them, advised the grand almoner to throw himself at the king's feet and confess everything that had transpired; but this he resolutely refused to do.

With regard to the scene at the Hôtel de Strasbourg, described by the Countess de la Motte, Cagliostro asserted this was merely an attempted experiment in animal magnetism, in which he was no great believer. The ribbons which the child was dressed out in were some that were lying about the apartment. He denied having placed his drawn sword on the child's head, and having made use of the words ascribed to him; but admitted there was a bottle of clear water on which the child placed her hand. The affair was got up entirely at the instigation of Madame de la Motte, who displayed great anxiety respecting the forthcoming accouchement of some great lady, and he performed the experiment in the hope of calming her. The countess's story about the table with a large number of lighted candles upon it, and the naked sword and poignard, and the crosses of Jerusalem and St. Andrew, had not a particle of truth in it. He never placed Madame de la Motte's hand upon these things, and nothing of what she had described took place. The cardinal did not fetch any diamonds from his secretary, and, indeed, the whole affair was a pure piece of invention. The cardinal had given him and his wife a few articles of jewellery as presents; all these things, and whatever other diamonds he possessed, had been seized by the police, and were still in their custody, and could be produced. The cardinal had never given the Countess de Cagliostro any diamonds forming part of the Necklace, nor any sum of money arising from the sale of the diamonds. He had never told the cardinal that his wife was intimate with the queen. She had never seen the queen, and was never once at Versailles, and could have had no correspondence with any one for the best of all reasons—she could not write.<sup>1</sup>

Cagliostro, in his examination, having stripped the countess's highly inventive narrative of its marvellous character, and exposed her falsehoods with respect to the diamonds, and having, moreover, previously stated in his memorial that he had cautioned the

\* "Interrogatoire du Sieur de Cagliostro."

Cardinal de Rohan to be on his guard against Madame de la Motte, whom he stigmatized as a wretch, but that the cardinal would not believe him, the countess's indignation knew no bounds. Knowing the doubtful kind of reputation that attached to Cagliostro, and the peculiar nature of the relations commonly believed to subsist between him and the cardinal, who, it was thought, aided and abetted him in his endeavours to discover the philosopher's stone—it was commonly reported that Cagliostro had prevailed on the cardinal to obtain possession of the Necklace, that he might experiment upon the diamonds and centripete their value<sup>1</sup>—the countess believed she could readily have diverted not merely suspicion towards the "low empiric," as she was now in the habit of styling him, but have induced a firm conviction of his guilt. This had been her aim from the outset, as is evident from the insinuations in which she indulged in her memorial with regard to Cagliostro, whom she, or rather her counsel, introduces in the following grandiloquent style :

"His name, his surname, his quality? he and the woman attached to his fortunes?—The Count and so-called Countess de Cagliostro !

"His age?—One of his valets said that he knew not the age of his master, but for himself he had been one hundred and fifty years in his service. As for the master, he sometimes gave three hundred years as his age, at other times he said he had assisted at Galilee at the marriage of Cana.<sup>2</sup>

"His country?—A Portugese Jew, or Greek, or Egyptian from Alexandria, who had brought with him to Europe the sorceries and allegories of the East.

<sup>1</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette, la Cour et la Ville," vol. i. p. 592.

<sup>2</sup> As an example of Cagliostro's audacity in this respect, it may be mentioned that, when first questioned by the lieutenant of police, who, in allusion to the Necklace affair, inquired if he had nothing to reproach himself with—he coolly replied, Nothing but the death of Pompey, and that even with regard to this he acted under the orders of Ptolemy. The lieutenant of police, not taken in the least aback, quietly observed they would refrain from going into any matters that occurred under his predecessors in office. See "Correspondance Secrète Inédite," etc., vol. ii. p. 18.



“His habits and his religion?—Doctor of the cabalistic art; one of those extravagant members of the Rosy Cross who profess to raise the dead, and make them hold converse with the living—masters of all the sciences, skilled in the transmutation of baser metals into gold—beneficent spirits who attend the poor for nothing, and sell immortality to the rich.

“His fortune? in short, his means of supporting that luxurious ostentation which he has displayed before our eyes?—A sumptuous hôtel, elegant furniture, a well-supplied table, servants in all sorts of liveries; and the court of this hôtel always noisy with carriages, announcing in the midst of an intelligent nation visionaries of every rank—in a word, Cagliostro, without inheriting anything, without purchasing anything, without selling anything, without acquiring anything, is possessed of all. Such is this man.

“What are his great deeds?—Many are known in the different courts of Europe, others are known to Madame Böhmer;<sup>1</sup> but let us confine ourselves to the third filtration of the Necklace, when it is needful to dispose the Count de la Motte to carry to a foreign country a considerable quantity of diamonds. This is the grand result furnished by the crucible of the operator.”<sup>2</sup>

Cagliostro, it may be observed, was greatly excited on hearing of the arrest of his wife, and on afterwards learning that she was ill, became perfectly frantic. He pretended to believe that she was dead or at her last extremity, and threatened to kill himself if he were not permitted to see her, or she were not immediately set at liberty.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We have been unable to fathom the meaning of this allusion. All we have succeeded in discovering about Madame Böhmer is, that she was the “famous Demoiselle Renaud,” but whence she derived her celebrity we are left in the dark.

<sup>2</sup> “Premier Mémoire pour la Comtesse de la Motte,” p. 27, *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Autograph Report of the Marquis de Launay, governor of the Bastille, in the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches.

## XXX.

1786. FEB.—MARCH.

THE TRIAL: THE CONFRONTATIONS OF THE ACCUSED WITH EACH OTHER  
AND WITH THE WITNESSES.

THE examinations having at length terminated, the confrontations of the accused with each other, and with the principal witnesses, now commenced. At the time these were going on, the accused, in accordance with custom, were deprived of the assistance of their counsel, who were not permitted to hold any intercourse whatever with them. Madame de la Motte and the cardinal were first confronted with each other. The countess describes being ushered into the hall of the Bastille, and the cardinal making his appearance shortly afterwards. The oaths having been administered, the opponents surveyed each other attentively; though, says Madame, the cardinal, "pretending to amuse himself with his pencil, which he twirled about in his fingers, affected not to regard me," and the duello of words at once began. And it was a mere duello of words, for the real points of the affair seem hardly to have been touched upon. At the outset the countess evidently thought she was getting much the best of the contest, for she observes in her "Life," that in her replies to the cardinal's interrogatories her expressions "were so strongly pointed, so pertinent and forcible, that every one present gave smiles of approbation."<sup>1</sup> When questioned as to whence she derived the means for such an unwonted display of opulence as she was known to have exhibited, she pointed to the cardinal, and gave the judges distinctly to understand that the relations subsisting between them were those of lover and mistress, and not benefactor and suppliant as had been commonly supposed; hence the motive for the liberal gifts which she had received at the hands of the Prince de Rohan.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. pp. 19, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Confrontations du Cardinal de Rohan avec Madame de la Motte.

As the contest went on, the cardinal, according to Madame's version, got some further awkward thrusts which touched him to the quick, and made him "look uneasy, and turn suddenly pale, and complain of a violent headache," which stayed the proceedings for a time. When these were resumed, the countess thought it necessary to object to what she styles some impropriety on the part of the cardinal—he put some pertinent question which it was not convenient for her to answer—whereupon a three hours' altercation ensued, during which the plethoric cardinal grew "red as fire," while madame, less excited "came off," she tells us, "with flying colours," the judges bestowing upon her "smiles of encouragement." Thus ended the first day's confrontation.

The day following, the cardinal entered the hall quite chapfallen; "instead of his former fierce and haughty demeanour, his eyes appeared to ask pardon, and his countenance was sweet and engaging."<sup>1</sup> His "mildness" gave the countess "fresh spirits, and increased her hopes," but a scene of wrangling began immediately—each accused the other of having had the Necklace, and of knowing what had become of it. "At this moment," remarks the countess, "I was not mistress of my temper, and loaded them all with reproaches," which brought down upon her a severe reproof from the judges, which did not, she confesses, "in the least tend to abate her violence."<sup>2</sup> The second day's proceedings terminated, therefore, in a greater tempest than the first had done.

If we believe what Madame de la Motte says, the cardinal, as the confrontations progressed, grew quite sentimental. Weak and foolish to the extreme point of folly we know the grand almoner to have been, still, now that the film was removed from his eyes, we can hardly credit that he acted the old dotard's part as the countess would have us believe. "He blew me over kisses," she says, "and when he discovered my eyes turned aside upon any other object, he played with his pencil to attract my notice." At another time, "he clasped his hands eagerly together, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, 'Ah!' exclaimed he, 'how unhappy we are!' He even shed tears."<sup>3</sup>

On a subsequent occasion the countess pretends that when they

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. ii. p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol. ii. p. 40.



were by themselves at one end of the hall the cardinal approached her, took her by the hand, and led her to the fireplace, and that while they were there standing in an attitude of the most friendly regard, engaged in earnest conversation, she suddenly rang the bell, which brought in De Launay, governor of the Bastille, and two of his officers, who surprised them in the attitude above described. "The lieutenant, De Losme," she observes, could scarce pardon me to see me holding discourse with my executioner, 'a person,' said he, with indignation, 'that endeavours to prove you a thief;'" and who did, indeed, in due course, not only prove her to be a thief, but procured her a felon's punishment.

Although, according to her own account, these confrontations opened so triumphantly for her, the countess at their close had lost much of that confidence which her overweening vanity had led her to feel, and tried hard to prolong the proceedings by urging that application should be made to the king for permission for her to send a letter to her husband, "to engage him to come in person to confront and disprove this preconcerted system of lying accusations which pretends that he has gone off with a part of the necklace." As if the count could not have come forward, and done all this of his own accord, as he might possibly have been tempted to do had he not entertained a wholesome fear of the scourge and the branding-iron, and of being chained to the oar as a galley slave for the rest of his life.

Judging from the countess's report of these confrontations, they would seem to have been merely a series of wordy wranglings; it is, however, quite certain that in the course of them many facts damaging to her in the last degree were brought to light. Her wretched poverty, up to the very moment when she touched the first fifty thousand livres of the cardinal's money, was proved beyond a doubt, as well as the comparative affluence which she displayed immediately afterwards. And the same with respect to the almost Oriental style of luxury in which the De la Mottes commenced to live immediately after the count had returned from England with the proceeds arising from the sale of the diamonds to the jeweller Gray.

The countess in her confrontation with Laporte—who had first mentioned the Necklace to her, and had introduced her to the crown jewellers—tried to wheedle him by such a shallow manœuvre

as thus addressing him : " I believe you to be an honest man, Monsieur Laporte. Forget for a moment that you have made any deposition, and distinctly answer my questions." Laporte, however, stuck to his text, and nothing favourable to the countess could be extracted from him.<sup>1</sup> When she and the Baron de Planta, the cardinal's equerry, are brought face to face, he declines to swear black to be white, and persists in saying that he had himself carried to her the two several sums of fifty thousand livres and one hundred thousand livres, for which she had applied to the cardinal in the queen's name. " I swear in the presence of justice, and on my honour and my head," exclaimed the indignant baron, " that I myself gave you these amounts from the Cardinal de Rohan to be remitted to the queen ;"<sup>2</sup> whereupon madame pronounces him to be mad, and in proof of her assertion recounts, with evident unction, the particulars of an attempted indelicate assault upon her by the baron in the month of October, 1784.<sup>3</sup> Regnier, the goldsmith and jeweller who supplied the De la Mottes with a service of plate, &c., and received diamonds in discharge of his account, having given his version of his transactions with the count and countess, the latter, following her usual system of denial, contradicts Regnier point blank, whereupon he exhibits the entries in his books made at the time. She then admits everything, and asks herself, with seeming astonishment, how it was possible in less than a year for her to have so far lost her memory.<sup>4</sup>

The countess, when confronted with Father Loth, loaded him with a shower of reproaches. " You bad man," exclaimed she, " it is you who have led my husband astray ; you have introduced him to disreputable women. You have persuaded him to live on bad terms with me. You have robbed me."<sup>5</sup> Grenier, the goldsmith and money-lender, had deposed that Madame de la Motte had ordered of him two superb robes of Lyons silk, saying she intended making a present of them to the queen ; in reply to which he had told her point blank that it was not likely she would dare to take

<sup>1</sup> " Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> " Mémoires pour servir," etc., par l'Abbé Georgel, vol. ii. p. 185.

<sup>3</sup> Confrontations de la Dame de la Motte avec les témoins.

<sup>4</sup> " Mémoire pour le Cardinal de Rohan," p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Confrontations de la Dame de la Motte avec les témoins.

the liberty of making presents to her majesty. Whereupon the countess remarked, that there was no such ceremony as he supposed between relations! She had, moreover, told him that she had reinstated the cardinal in the queen's good graces, and that her majesty dared refuse her nothing, and had also shown him a letter which she said had been written to her by the queen, but which she would not allow him to read.<sup>1</sup> When brought face to face with Grenier, she exclaimed, "He has been in the Bastille for fifteen days, and when he comes out his first act is to depose against me out of revenge, because I once had him put outside my house, and because it was in relation to me that he was imprisoned."<sup>2</sup>

With regard to her confrontations with the Demoiselle d'Oliva, the countess complains that questions were put to the latter in such a form that she had only to answer yes or no. "I did not let this escape me," she remarks, "but desired Dupuis de Marcé, one of the reporters of the case, appointed by the parliament, to suffer her to speak, and not to be her mouthpiece. He turned red, was stung with rage, and getting up like a demoniac, put an end to the sitting."<sup>3</sup> When it was resumed, and that portion of D'Oliva's declaration was read which spoke of the letters, purporting to have been written by the queen, which the countess had shown her, Madame de la Motte cannot conceal her agitation. She makes signs to D'Oliva, winks her eyes at her, and finding that she takes no notice, keeps repeating the action. When charged with this, she replies in a furious tone of voice, "I make signs to you? Yes, I make you a sign that you are a monster for having said such a thing." She then proceeds to charge D'Oliva with having behaved immodestly when on a visit to her at Charonne, says she was guilty of positive indecencies, that she was only a common courtesan, who had been for some time her husband's mistress, and who had usurped a title to which she had no claim. She next enlarged upon D'Oliva's affairs generally, and spoke of her pecuniary embarrassments, and of the real and supposed disappointments she had experienced, with "audacity, arrogance, and fury;" for all of which she was duly taken to task by D'Oliva's counsel in a new edition of

<sup>1</sup> "Compte rendu de ce qui s'est passé au Parlement," etc., pp. 75-6.

<sup>2</sup> Confrontations de la Dame de la Motte et du Cardinal.

<sup>3</sup> "Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte," p. 235.



his client's "Mémoire." "Proud and vile woman," the memorial proceeds to say, "who caressed me when I could serve you, who disdained me when I exposed you, who hate me when I confound you, descend, descend from the supreme height of your genealogical tree, from whence you brave the law, impose upon its administrators, and insult by turns your unfortunate co-accused."<sup>1</sup>

As for Cagliostro, on whom and on whose wife the countess had tried her utmost to shift a portion of her own guilt—out of revenge, we suppose, for the count having been the first to suggest to the cardinal that she had tricked him in the Necklace business—he is "this oracle who bewitched the cardinal's understanding," a low alchemist, a false prophet and profaner of the true religion, a mountebank and a vagabond. To which Cagliostro pertinently replied, "Not always a false prophet, for had the Prince de Rohan taken my advice he would have seen through the artifices of the countess, and neither of us been where we are. To her numerous calumnies I will content myself with making a laconic reply, the same that was made by Pascal under parallel circumstances—a reply which politeness forbids me to make in the vulgar tongue, but which madame's counsel will translate for her, *Mentiris impudentissime*."<sup>2</sup> The countess, not knowing the meaning of the phrase, imagined, correctly enough, that it was something exceedingly offensive, and to use her own language, "put an end to the scene by throwing a candlestick at the quack's head! Cagliostro, enraged and foaming at the mouth, said to me, 'He will come, thy Villette! he will come! it is he that will speak!'"<sup>3</sup>

Referring to her confrontation with Madame Dubarry, the countess observes, "I cannot withstand the temptation of saying a few words concerning the part assigned to the 'queen dowager,' the immaculate Dubarry of monastic memory. She stated that I had been at her house to solicit her protection, and that I had left with her a memorial, signed 'Marie-Antoinette de France.' The fact is, I only went to her house out of curiosity in a good coach and four. Upon her signifying to me that she thought the branch of Valois had been extinct, I gave her a memorial of my genealogy,

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire pour la Demoiselle Leguay d'Oliva," p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoire pour le Comte de Cagliostro," p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> "Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte," p. 238.

signed '*Marie-Antoine d'Hozier de Sérigny*, Judge of the Nobility of *France*.' When confronted with me she assumed an air of haughtiness and insolence, but I hastened to make her sensible of the distance between her birth and mine."<sup>1</sup> This wrangling between such a pair of demireps must have been highly amusing to all who chanced to be witnesses of it.

The cardinal, alluding to the confrontations in one of his memorials, says that Madame de la Motte generally either cried or went into convulsions at them, and that with her, audacity, gaiety, and tears succeeded each other by turns, according as she found herself capable of sustaining a part, or felt herself forced to succumb to feelings of remorse and fear.<sup>2</sup>

During Lent of 1786, while the public excitement with reference to the Necklace trial was at its height, the Abbé Georgel, grand-vicar to the cardinal, whose office of grand almoner gave him spiritual jurisdiction over the royal chapel at Versailles, the Hospital of the Quinze-Vingts, and the Assumption, caused to be printed and posted on the doors of the churches and sacristies dependent on the grand almonry, a charge, wherein he quoted the words of St. Paul to his disciple Timothy, exhorting him to blush neither for his captivity nor for his bonds. Copies of this charge were even posted in the royal chapel itself.

The zeal of the Abbé Georgel here carried him a little too far. The king and queen were deeply irritated, and the Baron de Breteuil sent for the offender and spoke sharply to him on the subject. Instead of expressing regret, the faithful grand-vicar, intoxicated with the success he had already met with in thwarting the enemies of the cardinal, his master, ventured to brave the minister of justice, replying to his remonstrances with firmness, and insisting on his right to exercise the powers which the cardinal had delegated to him. The minister, taken aback at so much assurance on the part of a mere abbé, required Georgel to furnish him with an explanation in writing. This the grand-vicar did in the following terms:

"I had the honour to observe to you, sir, that monseigneur the cardinal not being under the bonds of a legal decree, enjoyed, even

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte," p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoire pour le Cardinal de Rohan," p. 50.

where he was, his rights as citizen, bishop, and grand almoner in all their fulness; that a detention which had not been pronounced by law did not take away from a prisoner the right to exercise his civil and ecclesiastical functions; that such an interdiction could be the consequence only of a decree of banishment or imprisonment; that the grand-vicars of monseigneur the Cardinal de Rohan, furnished with his powers, were legally authorized to exercise in his name and under his orders their respective functions; and that our legal code was precise on the application of these principles.

"You then tell me, sir, to send you all these details in writing. I obey the minister of the king, and shall await with the profoundest respect the orders of his majesty respecting the conduct which I ought to show in my quality of grand-vicar."<sup>1</sup>

This was another false step on the abbé's part, for the minister retaliated by a *lettre-de-cachet*, and the only order the grand-vicar received from his majesty was a command, dated March 10, 1786, to depart from Paris within four-and-twenty hours for Mortagne in Brittany. Thus at a most critical point in the proceedings instituted against him was the cardinal suddenly deprived of the services of his able and energetic grand-vicar.

On the 26th of March, owing to the exertions of Counsellor D'Epréménil, who pressed her case on the attention of the parliament, the Countess de Cagliostro succeeded in regaining her liberty after upwards of seven months' confinement in the Bastille; and about this time the women of Paris, who were great partisans of the cardinal's during the entire period of his imprisonment, took to wearing in their toilettes a combination of scarlet and straw-colour ribbons, jocularly entitled "cardinal on the straw"—meaning the cardinal in prison. Grand dames of fashion, too, at the Easter promenade of Longchamp, came out in straw bonnets with scarlet crowns, and trimmed with scarlet ribbon, which Mademoiselle Bertin, the queen's milliner—at this moment out of favour at court—had introduced under the name of *chapeaux au Cardinal*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Autograph Letter of the Abbé Georgel, in the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches.

<sup>2</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. ii. p. 31.



## XXXI.

1786. APRIL—MAY.

ARREST OF THE FORGER VILLETTE—HIS EXAMINATIONS AND  
CONFRONTATIONS.

It is now that Rétaux de Villette is unearthed with the Abbé Georgel's sleuth-hounds in full cry. Tracked from town to town, and from village to village, he is at length run down at Geneva, having, says one account, since the news of the Necklace affair, crossed the Swiss frontier, assumed various disguises, and turning his musical talents to account, acted the part of a vagrant musician, playing on his mandoline along the streets and highways to amuse the passers-by. One version of his capture represents him as having been trepanned in some low Geneva tavern, whilst overcome by drink, into enlisting in some phantom regiment, by which adroit manœuvre he was enticed from off the "sacred republican soil," and carried away to Paris in triumph.<sup>1</sup> Another version affirms that he had got mixed up in a local brawl at the time the abbé's emissaries pounced upon him, which is likely to be the truer statement of the two, as it is corroborated by his own account of his arrest. "A disturbance," he says, "probably brought about by design, arose in the public streets between two Geneva watchmakers. A Frenchman, witness of the affair, interposed as peace-maker; whereupon he was seized, together with the two disputants. 'Where do you come from?' was asked of him. 'From Lyons.' 'Ah! there has been a great robbery recently committed there. What brought you to Geneva?' 'Nothing.' 'What is your name?' 'Rétaux de Villette.' 'To prison with him!' A few days afterwards an inspector of police arrived from Paris, and carried off the prisoner to the Bastille."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Carlyle's Critical and Miscellaneous Essays," vol. iv. p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> "Requête pour le Sieur Marc-Antoine Rétaux de Villette," p. 5. See also "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. ii. p. 26.

This must have been about the commencement of April, and no sooner did Villette find himself within the grip of the French police for the second time than he became quite chapfallen. On the road to Paris he was low-spirited to a degree, constantly speaking of himself as a lost man, as a victim about to be sacrificed. His distress, he tells us, was "aggravated by the jokes of the officers, in which they appeared to take a malicious pleasure."<sup>1</sup> Now and then when cheered with wine he would chat confidentially with police-inspector Quifor concerning his *liaisons* with Madame de la Motte, and would let fall scraps of information respecting the "*belle demoiselle*" of the Palais Royal, the part she played at the midnight meeting at Versailles, and the influence which the countess exercised over the Prince de Rohan ; but with regard to everything that related to the Necklace, and the *billets-doux*—"gilt edged," or bordered with "vignettes bleues,"—and the forged signature to the contract with the jewellers, he preserved a discreet silence.

When housed within the gloomy walls of the Bastille he became slightly, but only slightly, more communicative. He railed at his former mistress for having been the cause of his ruin ; described how he came to Paris to obtain a situation in the marshalsea, when, unfortunately for him, he fell into the snares of the siren, who, by pretending to have influence in high quarters, won his confidence, and by promising to do something better for him than his modest expectations led him to hope for, induced him to relinquish all idea of the post he was on the point of securing. Being frequently at her house, the countess employed him in drawing up and copying memorials setting forth the claims of the house of Valois, and asking sometimes for restitution, and at others for pecuniary assistance ; also memorials on behalf of individuals in whom Madame de la Motte took an interest, addressed either to the ministers, or to persons in high official positions, from whom places were solicited for the applicants.

At his first examination Villette confessed absolutely nothing but what he was well aware was already known beyond the possibility of doubt. For instance, he admitted that he was acquainted with Mademoiselle d'Olive, and that he accompanied the count and

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire Historique des Intrigues de la Cour," etc., par Rétaux de Villette, p. 60.

her to Versailles on a particular day, in the evening of which she was dressed out, and went with the countess to the park, where he and the count also proceeded. In substance he admitted the acting of the part of the queen by D'Oliva, who left the park with him and the count—the countess going off with the Cardinal de Rohan and the Baron de Planta. Villette scrupulously avoided everything like an admission of having written any letters for the countess. He denied having written a letter for D'Oliva to give to the cardinal, or one for the countess to read to D'Oliva as though it were from the queen. He believed D'Oliva was paid for the part she acted, but did not know the amount; he himself carried her three hundred livres on one occasion. When questioned respecting the Necklace, he replied that he knew absolutely nothing about it, nor of the negotiation for its purchase, nor of the letters said to have passed between the cardinal and the queen relative to this purchase. He confessed he was very frequently at Versailles, but could not tell whether he was there on the particular day the Necklace is said to have been delivered. At any rate he knew nothing of the circumstances connected with its delivery, was not the bearer of any letter respecting it, and certainly did not write any such letter. Was not aware of the Necklace being taken to pieces, though he admitted having had some diamonds given to him to sell. Did not know the object of the count's journey to London; was not aware that he sold any diamonds there, or that he returned to Paris with letters of credit for a considerable amount. He admitted having assumed the name of Augeard, but only as a disguise for carrying on intrigues with women.

Villette of course utterly denied all knowledge of the signature to the contract, but when asked if he thought the cardinal was able to discern whether the signature was genuine, he replied, that for his own part, without possessing the intelligence of the cardinal, had he been in his place he would not have been duped. During the time he was in familiar intercourse with the De la Mottes they appeared, he said, to live like persons of means, but he knew nothing of their sources of income. With respect to their opulence, although he had witnessed it, he had never shared it, save as a hanger-on—a guest who always had a seat at their table. With regard to the De la Mottes' motive for leaving Paris in August last, he understood from madame that her circum-



stances were embarrassed. He admitted having received four thousand livres from madame, but only as a loan to enable him to visit Italy, where he had long desired to go; and confessed to having slept part of the night in a cabriolet in the courtyard of the De la Motte hôtel ere setting forth on his journey early on the following morning. Finally he stated that he had had no correspondence with the De la Mottes subsequent to his departure.<sup>1</sup>

Less than a month's reflection in the Bastille seems to have sharpened Rétaux de Villette's memory on several essential points, for he writes a letter to the Count de Vergennes, in which he confesses everything except the receipt of the casket containing the Necklace; this he persisted in denying to the last. In consequence of this letter he is again brought up for examination, when, the contract being produced and shown to him, he admits the words "*approuvé*" and the signature to have been written by himself alone, not in imitation, however, of the queen's handwriting, but in his own ordinary hand.<sup>2</sup> It was done, he said, at the request of Madame de la Motte, and on her assurance that it was to oblige the cardinal. He also confessed to having written, at the countess's dictation, all the *billets-doux*—gilt-edged, or bordered with *vignettes bleues*—which purported to have been addressed by the queen to the Prince de Rohan, and two letters in particular, in which the queen charged Madame de la Motte to ask the cardinal, in her name, first of all for sixty (fifty) thousand livres, and secondly for one hundred thousand livres, for an immediate payment the queen had to make.<sup>3</sup> Villette positively denied having been the bearer of a billet purporting to have been written by the queen on the evening of the 2nd of February, and of receiving the casket containing the Necklace, and he complacently referred to the striking difference that existed between

<sup>1</sup> Premier Interrogatoire de Rétaux de Villette.

<sup>2</sup> If this statement was true it is difficult to conceive how the cardinal and the jewellers could have been deceived by the signature affixed to the contract, for there is not the slightest resemblance between Villette's bold upright style of penmanship as it appears in the numerous signatures appended to his depositions, etc., and the cramped, slanting, handwriting of Marie-Antoinette. Even if the cardinal was unacquainted with the precise character of the queen's handwriting at this epoch, it is most improbable that Böhmer was in a like state of ignorance.

<sup>3</sup> "Compte rendu de ce qui s'est passé au Parlement," etc., p. 103.

the individual indicated by the Cardinal de Rohan and himself. The former, he remarked, had big black eyebrows, a pale thin face, and slender figure ; whereas his eyebrows were light, his face full and somewhat rubicund, and his figure inclined to be portly. With regard to the Necklace, he knew that it had been broken up, and that the diamonds intrusted to him to sell formed part of it, but he denied having had any of the diamonds given to him, or of having received money from Madame de la Motte for appending the forged signature to the contract. "It is true she has lent me money," observed he, "and I have kept a note of it, but whenever I have spoken to madame on the subject she has always been polite enough to say that she did not wish the matter mentioned." Finally, he expressed his firm belief that Cagliostro was entirely innocent of any complicity in the affair.<sup>1</sup>

The countess now undergoes a second examination at which she denies that Villette wrote any letters to the cardinal in the name of the queen. Having had time to reflect upon the weight of evidence against her, she now admits the truth of the statement with respect to the meeting between the cardinal and D'Olive in the park of Versailles, but pretends the affair was a mere pleasantry got up to quiet the restless cardinal. She still denied that she had applied to him for the several sums of fifty thousand and one hundred thousand livres, and maintained that she had never received these amounts. Denied, moreover, having ever seen the contract with the jewellers, and having got Villette to sign the same. When told that Villette had confessed, she simply replied that she could not conceive his motive for stating the signature to be his ; said she first knew of the signature being forged when the cardinal showed her part of a note written by the queen. Next day, after having again reflected, we find her adhering to her text, and contenting herself with remarking that Villette had been overpersuaded to say that he signed the document, and by her orders.

At Rétaux de Villette's first confrontation with the countess, after making the damaging admissions which he had done, he seems to have given way to feelings of remorse at having betrayed, as he says, "a woman whom I loved to adoration, and who had

<sup>1</sup> Deuxième Interrogatoire de Rétaux de Villette.

loaded me with benefits." He declared that De Launay, Dupuis de Marcé, Fremyn, the Count de Vergennes, and others, had forced him to assert, with the view of saving himself, that the countess alone had instigated him to write the false signature of the queen so as to cheat the cardinal, whereupon the sitting was immediately broken up without giving him time to finish what he was about to say.<sup>1</sup>

When confronted, however, with Madame de la Motte on a subsequent occasion, he tries his hardest, though in vain, to induce her to speak the truth. He told her that her denials could be no longer accepted as proofs while he, the principal agent, and other witnesses were giving her the lie. "You will not see," he continued, "that everybody accuses you, and that your voice necessarily loses its power. It is useless to deny that the cardinal, you, and I are culpable in this affair. You seek to destroy the avowal which I make of my own guilt. You say that I lie when I accuse myself of forgery. You ruin yourself in acting thus, and evidently do not understand your own interests."<sup>2</sup>

Madame, however, conceived that she did, and was prepared with her rejoinder, which she made with all the tact and vehemence of the professional advocate. "The observations," remarked she, "that M. Villette has made are only made to frighten me. I fear nothing, and am perfectly calm. To all his remarks I persist in replying that I neither urged him to write the signature nor the '*approuvés*,' nor any other similar writing purporting to come from the queen. If M. Villette is good enough to say that he has written the signature and the '*approuvés*,' it is owing to the fear with which he has been inspired on being told that his ordinary handwriting bore so striking a resemblance to the signature appended to the document, and that he would be certain to be condemned, by reason of this resemblance alone, to corporal punishment. He has been told that if he confessed to this, his punishment would be materially lightened. This is what has caused him to make the confession, which I maintain is false. . . . I repeat that I am in nowise guilty. I await with calmness the punishment that may be awarded me, and I ask no grace.

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire Historique," etc., par Rétaux de Villette, pp. 65-72.

<sup>2</sup> Confrontations de Madame de la Motte avec Rétaux de Villette.



“With regard to M. le Cardinal, whom M. Villette has just said he believed to be as guilty as we two, I shall not charge myself with his defence, nor with that of any other person, not knowing whether he is guilty or no. If I were in possession of any secret that would tell against the cardinal in the Necklace affair I should not hide it, because for a long time past he has caused me much suffering. As for myself, I again say that I have no confession to make, as M. Villette pretends I have, for I am not guilty, and I am persuaded that he is no more guilty than myself. If I were guilty I would make a confession, in the hope that my punishment would be less grave. As it is, I could only make a false confession ; and although M. Villette tells me that every proof has been obtained against me, and that I have only my bare assertions to oppose to these, I repeat again that I leave my judges at liberty to find me guilty, still asserting that I am innocent and free from crime.”<sup>1</sup>

With this smart peroration of madame's the confrontations were brought to a close, and the accused were remanded back to their several quarters in the gloomy old fortress to await the next step which the law would in due course take. The revelations of D'Olive, and more particularly those of Villette, by utterly changing the aspect of things, had sadly weakened the countess's confidence in her line of defence, and the hold which she believed she had on the sympathy of the public. To retain so much of the latter as was possible, she published a third memorial, or summary, as it was called—her second was simply a rejoinder to Cagliostro—made up, as was her custom, of an artful combination of ingenious fallacies well calculated to perplex, if not to delude, the understanding.

M. Feuillet de Conches has, among his collection of autographs, an extensive MS. in the countess's handwriting, consisting of her observations upon the various “Mémoires” issued on behalf of her co-accused, and of reports of what passed at her own examinations and confrontations. This was evidently prepared for the use of her advocate, M. Doillot, who drew up her memorials from materials she supplied him with, and whom it is quite certain, from the evi-

<sup>1</sup> “Sommaire pour la Comtesse de la Motte,” pp. 17, 18.

dence furnished by this MS., Madame de la Motte did not scruple to attempt to deceive, just as she tried to deceive her judges, and, indeed, every one else with whom she came in contact.<sup>1</sup>

“ Her foot on earth, her forehead in the skies,  
Things done relates, not done she feigns,  
And mingles truth with lies.”

In neither of the countess's memorials does she seek in any way to implicate Marie-Antoinette, nor make the least claim to that intimacy with royalty which she subsequently maintained in her “*Mémoires Justificatifs*” with such wanton audacity, and again in her “*Life, written by herself,*” but lays everything to the charge of the cardinal, fascinated, deluded, and overruled by Cagliostro. As a type of the depravity of the human heart when no moral laws restrain its licence, a book more astounding and impudent than “*The Life of Jeanne de St. Remi de Valois, Countess de la Motte,*”—from which, in the course of our narrative, we have extracted everything of the least importance wearing an air of truth—was, perhaps, never written.

New memorials, however, were of no use now. Her game, which had been most audaciously played, was played out. People of every class turned against her. The queen and the cardinal were no longer victims to that prejudiced and hastily-formed opinion which, without waiting for the pleadings of the lawyers or the verdict of a jury, passes sentence beforehand. Alone and apart from even her fellow-prisoners, this powerful impostor stood detected as the liar, the swindler, the thief, the contriver of the plot, the single and crafty director of a complicated fraud. And the man who was the first to betray her, and “whose villany and diabolical machinations,” to quote the countess's own words, had caused all this to come to light, had been one of her familiars—friends she could hardly be said to have had—a constant hanger-on at her house, an almost daily guest at her table, “who, by way of rendering himself necessary,” says the countess, “pretended that, as my husband and I were young people, it was requisite we should have some trusty person to superintend our domestics. He superin-

<sup>1</sup> See note, p. 164, vol. i. of “*Lettres et Documents Inédits de Louis XVI. et Marie-Antoinette,*” par M. Feuillet de Conches.

tended, and had the disposal of everything in the house, and when I went into the country he had all the keys, and the care of paying my servants.”<sup>1</sup> Recalling all this to mind in her “Life,” the countess heaps on Father Loth some of her choicest expletives—“serpent” and “viper” being the most favourite. He is, for instance, “the serpent that stung me to the heart;” “the serpent that darted his envenomed sting against me;” “the dangerous viper that stung the bosom that cherished it;” “this disgrace to human nature;” “this iniquitous monk, who embezzled my money and my watch;” “this perjured and malignant monk;” “this solitary savage;” “this dexterous hypocrite;” “this hypocritical, this notorious villain;” “this monster;” “this profligate and abandoned wretch;” “this wretch who has violated every moral obligation.”<sup>2</sup>

The countess’s confederates had confessed themselves guilty, but there was this excuse for them—they were merely her tools and instruments. Villette, in his time of tribulation, might well protest that he was not that great friend and confidant of Madame de la Motte which he was represented to be, for, said he, “*she had no friends, and her confidence never was bestowed absolutely on any one.*” She merely instructed her instruments in what was necessary to the parts they had to perform, and kept the secret of the combinations entirely to herself.<sup>3</sup> D’Oliva had captivated the public by her ingenuous explanation of a stratagem which, it was evident to every one, she had had no share in conceiving or conducting to its issue, although she had taken a part in it. And as to the forger Villette, he had rendered so great a service to the law by his complete exposure of the crime which had been committed, and had so disarmed resentment by his apparent contrition, as to call forth towards himself a kind of latent pity, in which contempt and disgust were to some extent mingled.

With regard to the countess, nothing seemed capable of subduing the wanton energy of this bold bad spirit. Confronted alternately with the cardinal, with the girl D’Oliva, with Cagliostro, and with Rétaux de Villette, besides several minor witnesses, she

<sup>1</sup> “Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself,” vol. ii. p. 330.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. vol. ii. p. 329, *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> “Requête pour le Sieur Marc-Antoine Rétaux de Villette,” p. 10.



stood, as we have seen, face to face with them, unabashed against them all. At first she denied everything ; accused them of the very crimes she had herself committed ; charged them with inventing, conducting, and executing the fraud from first to last ; even swore that her two chief confederates, standing there as witnesses against her, had been suborned by the relations of the cardinal, and had formed a conspiracy to shift their own dishonour upon her. She told her judges to remember that she was a Valois, descended from the princes who had formerly reigned over them. Perching herself on this imaginary pedestal, she seemed to forget that she was a prisoner on her trial before the country, and thundered her denunciations against her fellow-prisoners in the loudest key, every eye shrinking and quailing beneath her own. Her judges were for the moment amazed and overawed by an assurance which far surpassed anything hitherto seen in a court of justice, whilst the cardinal respectfully styled her "madame" whenever he addressed her.

Every time she was called upon to explain some circumstance with reference to which the statements of the rest of the accused tallied and directly contradicted her own assertions, those present glanced at one another expecting that she would be mute at last, and yield to the weight of evidence against her. But no ; her fertile invention, like that of Napoleon at Marengo, supplied her at a moment's warning with some new combination. When asked to explain the source whence she had derived the means of supporting her extravagant expenditure during her twelve months of display, she replied that she had met with princely benefactors. The Cardinal de Rohan had alone given her 203,720 livres. Observing the looks of incredulity with which this statement was received, to account for the cardinal's unheard-of liberality, she explained to her judges that relations of a very tender nature existed between her and the grand almoner.<sup>1</sup> She asserted, moreover, that she had got up the scene with D'Oliva in the park of Versailles to revenge herself upon the cardinal for an infidelity of which he had been guilty.<sup>2</sup> Among her other "princely benefactors" she enumerated Madame, the Countess de Provence, who, she stated,

<sup>1</sup> Confrontations du Cardinal de Rohan avec Madame de la Motte.

<sup>2</sup> "Compte rendu de ce qui s'est passé au Parlement," etc., p. 97.

had given her 13,200 livres, while the Duke d'Orléans had given her 12,000 livres, the Duke and Duchess de Chartres 26,000, the Duke de Choiseul 12,000, the Duke de Penthièvre 8,400, M. de Castries 3,000, and the controleur-général 6,000. All these statements were of course false. For instance, the Countess de Provence had only given her twelve or fifteen louis, and this immediately after the fainting scene, we imagine; the controleur-général had given her about fifty louis; and M. de Castries eight hundred, instead of three thousand livres. M. d'Ormesson, whose name she does not mention, said he had sent her a few louis *by the hands of the police*; while, as regards the eight thousand four hundred livres which she pretended she had received from the Duke de Penthièvre, the chief of his council, the Abbé de Noir, who happened to be present, rose up and indignantly declared the countess's assertion to be false.<sup>1</sup> Being asked to explain what she had done with the 150,000 livres extorted from the Cardinal de Rohan in August and October, 1784, in the queen's name, Madame de la Motte calmly smiled, and with a look of offended dignity and wounded innocence, vowed that she had never so much as seen the money.

As each damaging fact came to light the countess did not content herself with launching tirades of abuse merely against the witnesses, "who swore," she tells us, "precisely what the cardinal's advocates pleased to put into their mouths." According to her own admissions, she on more than one occasion abused her judges to their faces,<sup>2</sup> while behind their backs she heaped upon them every variety of vituperative epithet. Commissary Chénon was "a wretch and a cunning dissembler;"<sup>3</sup> Fremyn was her "inveterate enemy;"<sup>4</sup> Dupuis de Marcé was "bought over," was a "creature of the house of Rohan," was "a monster," "a sly and venomous serpent," "a perfidious miscreant," and "prevaricated to a scandalous excess."<sup>5</sup> Both he and Fremyn were "dissemblers," both "would convict the innocent rather than hear the truth;" "every ray of evidence which would have made in my favour was

<sup>1</sup> "Compte rendu de ce qui s'est passé au Parlement," etc., p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. pp. 31, 71.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. vol. i. p. 408.      <sup>4</sup> Ibid. vol. i. p. 449.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. vol. ii. pp. 18, 51, 77; and "Mémoires Justificatifs."

refracted and broken by the medium through which it passed ;”<sup>1</sup> both had “the villany to alter and interpolate the records.”<sup>2</sup> She further accused the deputy procureur-général and the judges of having “caballed against her ;”<sup>3</sup> maintained that even the registrar, Le Breton, was “in the cardinal’s interest.”<sup>4</sup> So, too, was the governor of the Bastille, rigorous old De Launay, to whom she moreover applies the epithet of “this perfidious governor.”<sup>5</sup>

While these examinations were proceeding, and when it was perfectly well known that Count de la Motte was residing in security on the other side of the Channel, an abundance of legal formalities were gone through to ensure his arrest, had he only happened to have been within the jurisdiction of the Paris Parliament. For instance, on the 15th of December, 1785, a writ of capture of the count’s body was decreed, and on the 15th of the following January, Regnault, “huissier of our said court,” was despatched to Bar-sur-Aube to execute the writ in question. On the 13th of February it was ordered that the said Marc-Antoine-Nicolas de la Motte should be summoned that day se’nnight by public proclamation, to have law and justice done upon him, which summoning accordingly took place in the town of Bar-sur-Aube, and subsequently at Paris, “by Simonin, sole sworn crier of the king, provost and viscount of Paris, and huissier of the Châtelet of Paris, accompanied by Regnault, huissier of our said court.”<sup>6</sup> Count de la Motte, however, failed to put in an appearance at either place.

<sup>1</sup> “Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself,” vol. ii. pp. 24, 27, 29.

<sup>2</sup> “Mémoires Justificatifs,” p. 237. To have tampered with the records, would have been exceedingly difficult, as the reader will perceive by referring to the extract from the National Archives, given at p. 395 *et seq.* of the Appendix to this volume.

<sup>3</sup> “Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself,” vol. ii. p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 109.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 66, 67.

<sup>6</sup> Arrêt du Parlement. “Collection complète de tous les Mémoires qui ont paru dans la fameuse Affaire du Collier,” etc., p. 24.



## XXXII.

1786. MAY 29, 30.

THE CONCIERGERIE.—BEFORE THE COURT OF PARLIAMENT, GRAND CHAMBER, AND “TOURNELLE.”

At eight o'clock on the night of the 29th of May, 1786, while the countess was quietly seated at supper, the gaoler of the Bastille burst into her room with the disagreeable intelligence that her business, “which looked a devilish bad affair indeed, was likely to be terminated *à la grève*” (that is, by the gallows). “Hold you in readiness at eleven o'clock,” said he, “for they will begin with you.” At eleven, accordingly, she was conducted to the council hall, where, after being searched by the *huissiers de la chaîne*, she was taken in a coach to the Conciergerie, that grim, grey stone building, at the river's brink, on the Ile de la Cité, whose time-worn, massive, conical-capped round towers frown disdainfully upon the crowd of handsome modern buildings around,—the one unrestored specimen of mediæval architecture of the least importance in all Paris.<sup>1</sup> To this same dismal prison some six years subsequently, Marie-Antoinette herself was sent, quitting it only when she went forth to die upon the scaffold.

“Released from the Bastille,” says Madame de la Motte, “Paris appeared to me superb, but our journey seemed extremely short. It was near midnight. All the front yard before the court of the Palais de Justice was illuminated, as well as the court itself; it was as light as day. The palace was amazingly crowded; all the guard were under arms. An officer came to give me his arm to alight from the carriage. I was conducted to a large hall, which they call the *greffe*, whither I was attended by four or five hundred persons. All the passages, the tables, every place was crowded. . . . I listened with pleasure to a profusion of civil things that were said

<sup>1</sup> This refers to its condition in the year 1867. It has since been renovated.

to me by the surrounding multitude, many of whom expressed very warm and sincere wishes for my success, and seemed much pleased at the manner in which I returned their civilities. About two o'clock, finding myself fatigued, I expressed a desire to take some rest; and after paying my respects to this numerous company, the keeper's wife conducted me to the apartment prepared for my reception."<sup>1</sup>

At six o'clock the Parliament, both Grand Chamber and Tournelle,<sup>2</sup> began to assemble. The princes and princesses of the house of Condé, allied to that of the cardinal, and of the houses of Rohan, Soubise and Guéménée, had gone into mourning, and thus significantly attired, placed themselves in a line in the corridor along which the councillors of the Grand Chamber had to pass, so that they might salute them as they entered the hall.<sup>3</sup> When they arrived, Madame de Marsan, pointing to the cardinal's assembled relatives, said to the councillors—"Gentlemen, you are about to judge the whole of us."<sup>4</sup> Upwards of sixty judges took their seats. The sittings were long and numerous, as it was necessary to read over the reports of the previous proceedings. A master of requests, a friend of the cardinal's, took notes of all that the judges said while this was going on, and passed them to the cardinal's counsel, who found means of communicating with the prisoner, and of advising him as to the course he should pursue when under examination. The counsellor d'Epréménil too, a warm partisan of the grand almoner's, likewise apprised his friends of many particulars which it was important for them to be acquainted with.<sup>5</sup>

The countess was in readiness, in the event of being summoned, by about half-past six o'clock. "It has been said," remarks she, "that I was tricked out and dressed; but the truth is, I had plain cambric linen, a cambric cloak, and for a bonnet a half-undress gauze, without ribbons, and was even without powder in my hair.

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. p. 93, *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> The "Tournelle" was the Chamber that had the judging of criminal matters.

<sup>3</sup> "Mémoires de Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. p. 290.

<sup>4</sup> Correspondance Inédite de la Comtesse de Sabran et du Chevalier de Boufflers (Paris 1875), p. 121.

<sup>5</sup> "Mémoires pour servir," etc., par l'Abbé Georgel, vol. ii. pp. 179, 196.

The gauze cap which I wore on my head very little squared with the ridiculous assertion that I was dressed. They began with poor Oliva,<sup>1</sup> who was delayed with her child. [She had given birth to an infant since her arrest.] The keeper's wife, to whom I expressed a desire to see her, brought her to my chamber, which was very near. I consoled the mother, but I gently reproved her for the wrongs she had done me in following so blindly the advice of her advocates relative to the supposed letter of the queen which she said I had shown her."<sup>2</sup>

The countess is mistaken in supposing that D'Oliva was the first to be interrogated. It was Villette who had that honour. He entered the hall and took his place on the *sellette* with "his eyes bathed in tears," and during his examination showed more good faith and repentance than he had heretofore done, avowing all his crimes without the slightest reserve. It was remarked, however, that for the first time he seemed anxious to accuse the cardinal, whom he had previously sought to shield, by maintaining that he had been the dupe of the falsehoods and intrigues of Madame de la Motte. Villette's examination was soon over, and between ten and eleven o'clock the keeper of the Conciergerie and his son conducted the countess up "the little staircase," which all criminals were obliged to ascend. Fremyn, "the dissembler," then came forward and took her hand, and led her to the hall where the judges were assembled. In this well-known apartment of the ancient Palais de Justice, where in the early days of the French monarchy the kings of the Capetian race were accustomed to keep their court, the Grand Chamber of the Paris Parliament had held its sittings for upwards of a century; and here it was that, under the presidency of the king, the famous *lits de justice* were likewise held. At the present day the Court of Cassation, the supreme court of appeal in France in matters criminal as well as civil, holds its "solemn audiences" in this celebrated chamber, the interior of which, in this renovating age, has not a single trace of its ancient mediæval character remaining to it.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> "Compte rendu de ce qui s'est passé au Parlement," etc., p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> "To-day," writes M. Berryer, in 1837, "when my fancy carries itself back to fifty years or so ago"—the very date of the Necklace trial—"to-



"The appearance of the hall, crowded as it was in every part, was to me," remarks Madame de la Motte, "a most tremendous sight; it was an awful, an alarming crisis. It is here that, accused without guilt, I was tried without justice, and condemned without proof, the accusation against me being supported on the narrow foundation of false testimony, apparent even to my very judges as contradictory and replete with absurdity. Too soon I understood the ambiguous meaning of my counsel, who, in attempting to prepare me for the occasion, had spoken to me of the '*sellette*.' I heard a number of voices tending to encourage me, and striving to inspire me with confidence. 'Must I then occupy this seat?' exclaimed I; 'must I be forced into this *sellette*, formed only for the reception of the guilty?' Agitated by the most heartrending sensations, I remained a long time in a most dreadful situation, my

wards the Palais de Justice, I recognize neither the same antique structure, nor the same internal divisions, nor those innumerable jurisdictions of which it was the seat, nor that inconceivable flood of persons interested, whose tumultuous waves were agitated every day for hours together, and more especially from noon until two o'clock.

"Outside the edifice was a large staircase, crowded with shops piled one above the other, flanked by the offices of writers, starting from the angle of the handsome railings, on the side of the Pont-au-Change, extending to the circle of the old Cour du Mai, and serving as a girdle to the Sainte-Chapelle, a confused mass of steps and stalls pictured with such animation in the *Lutrin* of Boileau. Who does not recollect the inquiry made by the countryman of an *avocat*, laden with several bags of briefs, on catching sight of this grotesque staircase, 'Sir,' said he, 'will you be kind enough to tell me what that building is?' 'It is a mill,' replied the over-worked *avocat*. 'Ah! I guessed as much,' remarked the countryman, 'from seeing so many donkeys carrying their sacks to it.'

"Under the immense vaulted galleries, and also surrounding all the columns of the great hall, were more rows of shops filled with merchandise of all kinds, which had caused the name *Palais Marchand* to be given to this temple of justice. The Parliament alone occupied seven large halls—the grand chamber, the *tournelle*, the three halls of inquests, and the halls of requests. The grand chamber, with its arched roof springing from gilded brackets, was an austere-looking place. Perched above were two galleries reserved for the accommodation of great personages, and which I have seen occupied, among others, by the Emperor Joseph II., the unfortunate Gustavus, king of Sweden, and by the Count and Countess du Nord, since Emperor and Empress of Russia."—*Souvenirs de M. Berryer*, vol. ii. p. 25, *et seq.*

knees knocking together, and my whole frame trembling with agitation, and feeling myself unable to articulate a single syllable. At length, but I scarce know how, I found myself seated, overwhelmed with shame at finding myself surrounded by such a number of judges, by such a crowd of spectators.”<sup>1</sup>

Such is the account which the countess herself gives of this incident. A contemporary record of the proceedings states, however, that she seated herself in the *sellette* with an impudent air, which she maintained throughout the two hours she was under examination, and indeed until she quitted this seat of shame.<sup>2</sup> After she was seated she heard, she says, “a general cry, which was re-echoed throughout the hall: ‘Proceed, proceed, madame; take courage!’ This encouragement, from so many of my judges, supported my sinking spirits; their looks animated me, and by degrees I was in a condition to answer them with that *consistency of truth and energetic fortitude which innocence alone inspires*.

“So great was the malice of Fremyn against me that he could not help exhibiting, even in the very face of my judges, a degree of rudeness and indelicacy which, upon such an occasion, in such a situation, but ill became him. This man came up to me rudely and desired me to take off my hood. I looked at him very attentively, and said, ‘Even before this august assembly you prove at this very moment how much you are my enemy.’ The assembly applauded what I said, and remonstrated with an air of disapprobation, ‘Oh! why do you so? Let the lady wear her calash.’

“The chief president, M. d’Aligre, now read to me my first interrogatory, which was expressed in so very few words that my judges could not determine from my reply whether I was innocent or not. ‘I should wish,’ I remarked, ‘that my judges would interrogate me upon those points which have relation to the Necklace; to these I am particularly anxious to reply, that I may have an opportunity of demonstrating what I have already advanced, what I have above a hundred times repeated, and what I have never swerved from.’ The judges all exclaimed that I was right, and were unanimously agreed to make some additions to the first interrogatory, which did not mention a syllable of the

<sup>1</sup> “Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself,” vol. ii. pp. 96-9.

<sup>2</sup> “Compte rendu de ce qui s’est passé au Parlement,” etc., p. 115.

leading point of accusation—the Diamond Necklace. ‘The cardinal has stated,’ said they, ‘that he brought the Necklace himself to your house at Versailles, and that he waited in an alcove till the arrival of a person who was to fetch it on the part of the queen; that you insinuate it was one of her majesty’s pages; that this man, as described by the cardinal, is very dark, has large black eyebrows, thin and tall, with large black eyes, his figure extremely slender. The cardinal observes also, that the alcove was about half open.’

“‘Absurdities like these, gentlemen,’ rejoined I, ‘raise my indignation, and I am convinced they will have a similar effect upon you.’ I then pointed out the contradictions in the cardinal’s assertions, explaining how, when he saw M. Villette at the confrontation, he immediately said that he recollected his profile, and that he was the very same person to whom I gave the Necklace; M. Villette being, in every respect, diametrically the reverse of the cardinal’s description. I called the particular attention of my judges to this circumstance, as it showed them the kind of reliance they could place on the remainder of the cardinal’s allegations. ‘Even if there did come a man, as the cardinal pretends,’ I went on to say, ‘does it wear a semblance of propriety, that if he brought a letter or note written to me, the cardinal should act upon that, even although the note should say the bearer was to be trusted with the jewels in question? Now the cardinal ought not to have returned me this note, which would then have become a receipt for him; both this note and the other, which mentions the receipt of the jewel, saying, “it is superb,” and which MM. St. James, Bassenge, and Böhmer, all depose to having seen in the cardinal’s hands. I request him to bring these letters before my judges, as well as two hundred others which he has read to me, and told me that they all came from the queen; and ask that he should be called upon to declare whether these letters were written by M. Villette. I hope you will emphatically insist that the cardinal shall produce them to the court, to be compared with that same *approuvé* of the contract with the jewellers, which Villette himself confesses to have written. If my judges will take the trouble to examine these, I dare affirm that they will find letters in three different hands, but not a single one in the hand of M. Villette.’



“Messieurs St. James and Böhmer have deposed that they have read a letter in the hands of the cardinal upon the terrace at Versailles, containing this expression: “I am perfectly contented with the jewel; it is superb,” &c. These persons have further deposed that the cardinal at the same time informed them that this letter came from the queen; and I, for my part, gentlemen, repeat what I have previously deposed,<sup>1</sup> and do now positively affirm and most solemnly declare, that I have also seen—that I have also myself read that letter.”

“The president then asked me if I really believed that letter came from the queen as well as the two hundred other letters which the cardinal showed me. I replied, that ‘the cardinal had given me his confidence and trusted me with his secrets. During the whole time I was so intrusted, he told me that he had seen the queen, and received letters from her;’ which was all I could, consistent with delicacy and propriety, permit myself to say.

“I had scarce uttered these words, when four abbés all rose up at once, though at some distance from each other, and began their speeches together. Nothing was to be heard but the hoarse jargon of contention. At length the discord abated, and the three gave way to the first; but as his question was of no consequence, I did not condescend to make any reply. At this, many persons present significantly shrugged their shoulders. The second and third were of a piece with the first; the fourth, as having more pretension to wit, I thought it necessary to reply to. This was the Abbé Sabattier, whose stentorian voice almost shook the foundations of the hall. ‘The countess,’ said he, ‘pretends that she has not interfered in any way concerning the sale of the Necklace. Why, then, when she was asked, “Who those persons were she had at her table?” did she reply that “They were persons with whom she had business?” I maintain that this answer goes to prove that she has been concerned in the sale of the Necklace; for if it were not to treat with them respecting it, why should she have any business with them?’ I looked at this great and penetrating genius with all that admiration which so shrewd a remark was entitled to. ‘The question,’ said I, ‘that the Abbé

<sup>1</sup> Nothing of the kind is to be found in the records of the countess’s examinations.

Sabattier puts to me is destitute of common sense ; it is, therefore, unnecessary to reply to it.' All the voices then raised themselves with one accord, bawling to the registrar, 'Write down what madame says, that the Abbé Sabattier's question is unworthy an answer, and has in it neither reason nor common sense !'

"The abbé, a good deal nettled, exclaimed, loudly, 'Gentlemen, I have a right to speak without being an object of derision, however much what I may have said may amuse you.' At this they all burst into a roar of laughter. As soon as they had finished exercising their risibility, 'Gentlemen,' said I, 'the questions of Messieurs the abbés do not in the least surprise me. I am forewarned that these gentlemen, who are about five in number, have had some hopes of recruiting their party by the addition of a sixth, and that all will give their votes in favour of the cardinal.' The registrar was now ordered, with a great deal of solemnity, to read to me the question of this aforesaid sagacious abbé, whom I answered in the following manner :—

" 'Gentlemen, the jewellers have indeed charged me in their depositions, but in their confrontations, where they were with me face to face, they have discharged me, since in carrying them the cardinal's note which requested their address, Bassenge admits that I desired him to use particular caution in dealing with the cardinal. I ask my judges if the jewellers are under no obligation to me, however slight it may be ? Am I not the primary cause of the sale of the Necklace [no doubt of it, and the jewellers must indeed have felt greatly obliged to the countess for the share she had altogether in the business], since it was to the cardinal I spoke of it, who purchased it, he says, for the queen ? Laporte himself positively deposed that I had told him above a hundred times that I would have nothing to do with the sale of the Necklace, and even that I absolutely rejected the offer of two hundred thousand livres in diamonds. I would further observe to my judges, that if I had wished to have appropriated the Necklace to my own use, I should certainly, in that case, have accepted the jewellers' offer, so as to conceal my intention of stealing the Necklace.'

"M. de Bretignières, honorary counsellor, who sat near me, now asked me a question. 'Since then, madame,' said he, 'you have read and seen such a great number of letters in the cardinal's

hands, you can tell us what they contained, and if the cardinal answered them?' I replied, that the question was extremely indiscreet and dangerous, and that it had better be put to the cardinal, who could be commanded to produce these letters, in which case the counsellor could satisfy his curiosity by reading them himself. My judges still insisting on clear categorical answers respecting these letters, I was obliged to reply as to their contents. 'Yes, gentlemen,' answered I, 'one of them makes mention of an appointment broken—of their pleasure at meeting; others "thee'd" and "thou'd" the cardinal.' 'Does madame really believe that these letters came from the queen—were written by the queen herself?' 'I do not know whether I ought to declare my thoughts concerning the acts of a queen, whom I am bound to honour and respect.' 'But did not madame think these expressions very strong—too strong to induce her to believe that they came from the sovereign?' 'That was the reason of my first expressing astonishment to the cardinal.' 'What answer did he make?'

"I was at length obliged to answer fully the questions which were put, feeling, after being so persecuted, that I could not retreat; but I cannot now remember the immense number of questions I was asked, nor the answers I gave. 'Bravo! bravo!' frequently exclaimed many of my judges. 'Certainly, certainly,' said they, clapping their hands, 'tis well replied.' 'Let the lady alone,' cried out numerous voices."

The "Compte rendu" of the Necklace case fortunately enables us to supply the deficiency in the countess's memory with respect to the foregoing incident. It seems that, in referring to a particular letter which she first of all stated commenced with the words "Send *to* the little countess," and which letter she asserted had been shown to her by the cardinal as written by the queen, she continually misquoted the opening phrase, converting it into "Send *by* the little countess." M. Barillon, after pointing out this variation in her evidence, asked of her the reason of it—a simple enough question, not requiring, one would think, much consideration to answer. The countess, however, after much hesitation, remarked with an air of mystery that she did not wish to reply to it; because, by doing so, she would offend the queen. Whereupon,



several of the judges represented to her that the sacred persons of their majesties could not suffer by any statement she might make, and that she owed the whole truth to justice. Then, getting angry, she exclaimed, that the letter really commenced with the words, "Send *thou* the little countess," and she added that the cardinal had shown her upwards of two hundred letters in which the queen "thou'd" and "thee'd" the grand almoner, and made assignations with him, several of which had taken place.<sup>1</sup>

The countess tells us that she now made observations on the whole of the accusation against her. "All the questions which had been addressed to me," she goes on to say, "together with my answers, were written down and read over to me. The president then asked me if I had anything more to add, to which I replied in the negative, only I particularly entreated that my judges would condescend to examine thoroughly into this business with an impartial eye, from whence I could not but entertain the strongest hopes that their definitive judgment would be in my favour."

"My enemies," remarks Madame de la Motte, "have laboured to convey the impression that before my judges I was bold and loquacious. They accused me, too, of pride. They were also kind enough to put words into my mouth which I never made use of, making me say, with respect to the cardinal, 'I am going to confound this great knave.'"<sup>2</sup>

Whether these accusations are true or false, we have no means of judging. It is quite certain, however, that the countess considered she had acquitted herself in rather a smart manner before her judges; and when they laughed at and cheered her sallies against the abbés, she no doubt thought she had succeeded in hoodwinking not a few of them, quite forgetting that though mankind may be ready enough to be amused, it is not invariably at the expense of its reason and its judgment.

"After I had made my obeisances to the assembly," continues the countess, "I withdrew, and was conducted by the keeper of the Conciergerie and a great many gentlemen whom I did not know, to his wife's apartment. All paid me their compliments, all expressed their approbation, observing that I defended myself well,

<sup>1</sup> "Compte rendu de ce qui s'est passé au Parlement," etc., p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. p. 100, *et seq.*

and that even an experienced advocate could not have pleaded my cause better." <sup>1</sup>

As soon as the countess had retired, the first president gave orders for the *sellette* to be removed, and sent to inform the cardinal that, this having been done, he could present himself before the court.<sup>2</sup> The Prince de Rohan entered, attired in a long purple robe, the mourning colour of cardinals, and with scarlet stockings and cap, and wearing his orders round his neck, saltier-wise. "He had," says his admiring grand-vicar, in his most grandiloquent style, "the noble presence of a man profoundly affected, but calm, in the midst of his troubles; his countenance expressed alike respect, modesty, and dignity, which disposed his judges favourably towards him. He held himself erect at the bar, his pallid complexion indicating the ravages of a recent illness which had nearly proved fatal to him. The first president, at the request of several of the councillors, invited him to be seated during the long examination which he was about to undergo. The prince marked his sensibility of the proffered favour by a profound bow, and only availed himself of it at the third invitation. Questioned successively by certain of his judges, who hoped to obtain satisfactory information on points not perfectly plain, he astonished them by the clearness, the precision, and the force of his answers. He perceived the great interest which his humiliating situation inspired, and profited by it frankly to develop the various false steps which his good faith and credulity had caused him to take. 'I was completely blinded,' exclaimed he, 'by the intense desire which I felt to regain the good graces of the queen.' This touching scene excited a profound sensation in the breasts of the members of this august tribunal which was about to decide the fate of one of the highest personages in the kingdom." <sup>3</sup>

When the examination of the cardinal was concluded, Cagliostro was summoned before the court. He presented himself before his judges dressed in a green velvet coat, embroidered over with gold lace; his hair, plaited from the top of his head, fell in small curls over his shoulders, which gave him a singular appearance, not alto-

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> "Anecdotes du règne de Louis XVI.," vol. i. p. 410.

<sup>3</sup> "Mémoires pour servir," etc., par l'Abbé Georgel, vol. ii. p. 197.

gether inconsistent with the character of the charlatan he was commonly believed to be. "Who are you?—whence do you come?" was asked of him. "I am a noble traveller," he replied. At these words the countenances of the judges brightened up, and observing that they seemed well disposed towards him, Cagliostro entered boldly upon his defence, intermingling his bad French with Greek, Arabic, Latin, and Italian. His expression, his gestures, and his vivacity were as amusing as the subject-matter of his discourse, and he quitted the hall perfectly satisfied with having made his judges smile.<sup>1</sup>

The D<sup>emoiselle</sup> d'Oliva was examined the last. As she had already confessed all she knew, and had nothing to add to her previous testimony, the interrogatories addressed to her were not many, and she was soon permitted to retire.

<sup>1</sup> "Anecdotes du règne de Louis XVI.," vol. i. p. 400.



## XXXIII.

1786. MAY 31.

## DEBATE IN THE COURT OF PARLIAMENT.—THE SENTENCES.

FROM half-past four in the morning of the 31st of May all the members of the cardinal's family, women as well as men, were assembled at the door of the parliament chamber, in order to be in the way of the judges as they passed into the hall. "They employed," we are told, "no other means of solicitation beyond preserving a mournful silence, in which might be discerned alike their grief, their firmness, and their respect for the throne and for the laws. This mode of solicitation, so noble, so worthy of the illustrious houses of Rohan, Soubise, Guéménée, and Lorraine, and at the same time so perfectly conformable to the nature of the affair in which the cardinal was implicated, made a more profound impression upon his judges than all the eloquence which was exercised in his behalf."<sup>1</sup>

If the members of the cardinal's family did not, on this occasion, publicly appeal to his judges in his favour, it is certain that during the course of the proceedings every effort had been made by the grand almoner's relatives and friends to increase the number of his adherents among the councillors who had to judge the case. Mesdames de Marsan and de Brionne, and the Prince de Soubise, visited all the members of the Grand Chamber in turn, and solicited them in the cardinal's behalf;<sup>2</sup> besides which, on the very morning of the trial, Madame de Brionne, dissatisfied with the attitude of the first president, did not scruple to reproach him in his own house with his partiality and bad faith, and to plainly tell him that it was well known he had sold himself to the Court.<sup>3</sup> We know that the prime

<sup>1</sup> "Compte rendu de ce qui s'est passé au Parlement," etc., p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. i. p. 615.

<sup>3</sup> "Correspondance Inédite de la Comtesse de Sabran et du Chevalier de Boufflers" (Paris 1875).

minister, the Count de Vergennes, was a secret partisan of the grand almoner's, and we know also, that M. de Laurencel, the procureur-général's deputy, drew up a list of names of members of the Great Chamber, wherein he set forth against each the means that had been employed to gain that particular councillor's vote. This list was found in after years among the papers which Marie-Antoinette intrusted to M. Campan during the Revolution, and which his daughter-in-law, Madame Campan, afterwards had under her charge. From this document it would seem that ladies of the highest position did not scruple to accept large bribes to exercise their powers of seduction in the cardinal's behalf, and it was by these means, we are told, that some of the most venerable and most respectable among the judges had been corrupted.<sup>1</sup>

Between five and six o'clock the Parliament, Grand Chamber, and Tournelle, had assembled. The number of members present amounted to sixty-two, which subsequently became reduced to forty-nine, when the loquacious clerical councillors had retired, as they were obliged to do, on its being found that the judgment involved afflictive punishments.<sup>2</sup>

The proceedings were opened by the procureur-général, M. Joly de Fleury, who, when contrôleur-général in former years, had experienced his share of persecution at the hands of Madame de la Motte, with whom he had now the opportunity of clearing off a few old scores. In a most able speech he submitted to the Parliament the following extremely fair proposition: First, that the Parliament should adjudge the "*approuvés*" and the pretended signature of the queen to be forgeries; secondly, that Count de la Motte should be sentenced to the galleys for life, by reason of his contumacy; thirdly, that Villette should undergo a similar sentence, and further, that he should be whipped and branded, and

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs of Marie Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. p. 295. In the doubtful Memoirs of the Princess de Lamballe, we find that Princess asserting she had had in her possession documentary evidence of the immense sums spent by the Princess de Condé in corrupting the judges and other persons. More than a million francs were expended, she says, by the families of Rohan and Condé in this way. See "*Mémoires relatifs à la Famille Royale de France*," etc., vol. i. pp. 306-7.

<sup>2</sup> "Anecdotes du règne de Louis XVI.," vol. i. p. 412.

his effects be confiscated; fourthly, that Madame de la Motte should be confined for life in the prison of the Salpêtrière, after being whipped and branded, her effects to be likewise confiscated; fifthly, that the Cardinal de Rohan should ask pardon of the king and queen for having been wanting in respect towards their sacred persons; that he should be banished the precincts of the Court, and that, during a period to be fixed by the Parliament, he should be suspended from his office of grand almoner; that he should be sentenced to such alms-giving as the Parliament might direct; and, finally, that he should be kept in confinement until he had obeyed and satisfied the judgment now given. Sixthly, that D'Oliva be put out of court. Seventhly, that Cagliostro be acquitted.<sup>1</sup>

The party opposed to the queen at once rejected these proposals. No sooner had M. Joly de Fleury done speaking, than M. de Barillon, a partisan of the cardinal's, started up and exclaimed that the conclusions to which they had just listened were not those of a procureur-général, but rather those of a minister whom it was not difficult to recognize; alluding, of course, to the Baron de Breteuil. The advocate-general, M. Séguier, to the surprise of the excited councillors, joined in this attack upon his colleague, whom he personally denounced.<sup>2</sup> Hereupon quite a scene ensued and accusations were bandied backwards and forwards between the legal officers of the crown. M. de Fleury reproached M. Séguier with his loose and disorderly life, with his nightly rambles in the Palais Royal, and the money that these cost him. "It may be so," replied the other, "out of my house I do what I please, but no one has known me to sell my opinion basely to fortune." The procureur-général made no reply to this insinuation but remained stupefied as it were with his mouth open.<sup>3</sup>

The incident having terminated, M. de Mineres passed in review all the various impostures of Madame de la Motte, maintained that the cardinal was not her only victim, that the jewellers had been equally deceived, for they loaded her with thanks for the exertions she had made in their behalf, and offered her presents, whereas,

<sup>1</sup> Extract from the Imperial Archives given in M. Campardon's "*Marie-Antoinette et le procès du Collier*," p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> "*Mémoires du Baron de Besenval*," vol. iii. p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> "*Correspondance Inédite de la Comtesse de Sabran*," etc., p. 123.



neither thanks nor presents were offered to the cardinal, whom the jewellers regarded simply as an instrument chosen by the countess to conduct the negotiation: other speakers instanced the letter of thanks which the cardinal had repeatedly advised the jewellers to send to the queen, as a convincing proof of his good faith. M. de Jonville, third master of requests, attributed the evidence which appeared to tell most against the cardinal entirely to the bad memory of Böhmer, of which he gave several proofs.<sup>1</sup>

The speeches of Councillors D'Epréménil and Fretteau, and the Abbé Sabattier, produced however the greatest effect. This celebrated trio showed the utmost boldness in attacking the court and braving its anger, and spoke vehemently in favour of the cardinal's complete acquittal.<sup>2</sup> Singularly enough, it was these very same three men who, a year or two afterwards, stirred up the Parliament to refuse to register the royal edicts, and were among the first to demand the convocation of the States-general, for which acts of temerity the two last were packed off by *lettres-de-cachet*—the one to the Castle of Ham, the other to dreary Mont St.-Michel, and D'Epréménil, a few months later to the Isle of Sainte-Marguerite (Calypso's enchanted island,) whence he returned—the Revolution having made rapid strides meanwhile—"a red-hot royalist," to finish his career under the axe of the guillotine. M. Robert de St.-Vincent was another of those who spoke in favour of the Prince de Rohan, who, he maintained, had been deceived by the most plausible lies. He denied the legality of the procureur-général's conclusions, and the power of the Parliament to incorporate them in its judgment, and asked for the cardinal's acquittal. He condemned, too, the publicity given to the proceedings, and expressed his regret that the king and queen had not been advised by some wiser minister, who would have been more regardful of the dignity of the crown. The president, D'Ormesson—the same who sent the countess a few louis "by the hands of the police"—offered an amendment to the procureur-général's proposition, to the effect that the cardinal should retain his offices and dignities, but that he should be required to ask pardon of the queen for the offence he had committed. There was no difference

<sup>1</sup> "Compte rendu de ce qui s'est passé au Parlement," p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> "Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. p. 293.

of opinion among the judges as to the measure of punishment to be meted out to Madame de la Motte, excepting that MM. Robert de Saint-Vincent and Dyonis du Séjour pressed the passing of sentence of death upon her. As her crime, however, had been unforeseen by the laws, this penalty could not be legally inflicted.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion, which was very animated, continued throughout the day. At two o'clock in the afternoon the sitting was suspended, in order that the judges might dine at a table which the first president had had set out for them in the hall of St.-Louis; the greater number, we are told, ate standing, and by half-past three the sitting was resumed. Between nine and ten o'clock at night, after the final voting had taken place, the following judgment was delivered.<sup>2</sup>

"The Court, the Great Chamber assembled, in the exercise of its jurisdiction and on the conclusions of the procureur-général of the king, declares that the words '*approuvé*' and the signature, '*Marie-Antoinette de France*,' have been fraudulently appended to the margin of the document, entitled, 'Propositions and Conditions of Price and Payment' for the Necklace brought in question at this trial, and which are falsely attributed to the queen; orders that the said words '*approuvé*,' and the said signature, '*Marie-Antoinette de France*,' shall be struck out and erased from the said document, and that mention shall be made of the present decree on the same, which will be and shall remain deposited in the criminal registry of the Court,<sup>3</sup> of all of which affirmation shall be made by the court registrar.

"Adjudging the consequences of the contumacy declared good and valid by the decree of the Court of the 10th of April, 1786, against Marc-Antoine-Nicolas de la Motte accused, absent—

"For the facts proved by the proceedings condemns the said Marc-Antoine-Nicolas de la Motte to be flogged and beaten naked with rods, and branded with a hot iron on the right shoulder with

<sup>1</sup> "Compte rendu de ce qui s'est passé au Parlement," etc., p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> "Anecdotes du règne de Louis XVI.," vol. i. p. 412.

<sup>3</sup> Spite of this express order the document is not to be found among the other papers relating to the "Affaire du Collier," preserved in the National Archives.

the letters 'G. A. L.' by the public executioner; this done to be led and conducted to the galleys of the king, there to be detained to serve our said king as convict for life.<sup>1</sup>

"Declares all the goods of the said Marc-Antoine-Nicolas de la Motte acquired and confiscated to the king, or whomsoever he may appoint, a fine of two hundred livres to the king being previously levied thereon: which sentence, by reason of the contumacy of the said De la Motte, shall be written upon a tablet, which shall be affixed to a post planted for this purpose in the Place de Grève (place of execution).

"Banishes Louis-Marc-Antoine Rétaux de Villette from the kingdom for life.

"Condemns Jeanne de Valois de Saint-Remi de Luz, wife of Marc-Antoine-Nicolas de la Motte, while having a halter round her neck, to be flogged and beaten naked with rods, and branded with a hot iron upon both shoulders with the letter 'V,' by the public executioner; this done, to be led and conducted to the prison of the Salpêtrière, there to be detained and confined for life.<sup>2</sup>

"Declares likewise all the goods of the said De la Motte, and the said Rétaux de Villette, acquired and confiscated to the king, or to whomsoever he may appoint; a fine of two hundred livres to the king being previously levied upon each.

"Upon the complaint and accusation brought at the request of the procureur-général of the king against Marie-Nicole Le Guay, alias d'Oliva or Dessigny, puts the parties out of court and discharges the process.

"Discharges Alexandre de Cagliostro and Louis-Réné-Edouard de Rohan from the complaint and accusation brought against them at the request of the procureur-général of the king.

"Orders, that the memorials printed for Jeanne de Saint-Remi de Valois de la Motte shall be and shall continue to be suppressed, as containing false statements, injurious and calumnious alike against the said Cardinal de Rohan and the said De Cagliostro.

<sup>1</sup> The letters G A L, with which Count de la Motte was sentenced to be branded, were doubtless intended as an abbreviation of the word *Galérien*, or galley slave.

<sup>2</sup> This branding of the Countess with the letter V, was designed to signify *Voleuse*, or thief.



"Upon the remainder of the request of the said De Cagliostro, alike against Commissary Chénon and De Launay, governor of the Bastille, puts it out of court, without prejudice to his appeal when and how he may be advised ; upon the rest of the demands, requests, and conclusions of the parties puts these out of court.

"Gives permission to the Cardinal de Rohan and the said De Cagliostro to cause the present judgment to be printed and posted up wheresoever it may seem good to them."<sup>1</sup>

Contemporary accounts agree in stating that something like ten thousand people were assembled in the courts and passages of the palace and in the neighbourhood of their approaches, all anxious to learn the judgment of the Parliament.<sup>2</sup> Crowds streamed across the Pont Neuf, the Pont Saint-Michel, the Pont-au-Change, and the Ponts Notre-Dame, coming from all parts of Paris. There were courtiers, men of letters, financiers, abbés, avocats, avoués, shopkeepers and their wives, students, working men, soldiers, police agents, men and women from the *halles*, and idlers of every description. "About nine o'clock at night," says Madame de la Motte, "I heard a report like that of acclamation in the courtyard. I ran to look out of one of the windows which commanded a view of the court, and saw crowds of people running very fast by the great staircase. I could not distinctly understand what they said, except that one of them, who was very near the window, cried out, 'Bravo ! bravo ! Upon my word, it is very fortunate for the cardinal ; but what will become of poor Madame de la Motte ?' The moment these words vibrated in my ear, they were like an electric shock. Unable to sustain myself, my legs bent under me : I tottered and sank into a chair. When I was a little recovered, the keeper of the Conciergerie, assisted by his son, conducted me to my apartment, where having left me for a few minutes, with a view of gaining authentic information of the definitive sentence of the court, they soon after returned. 'The cardinal,' said they, 'is put out of court, and delivered from further process ; Cagliostro and D'Oliva are the same ; Villette, madame, is banished, as well

<sup>1</sup> "Arrêt du Parlement," preserved in the National Archives, X<sup>2</sup> 2576.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires Historiques et Politiques du règne de Louis XVI.," par l'Abbé Soulavie, vol. vi. p. 73.

as you.' 'For how long?' 'I believe, for three years; but everybody blames the judges. We think there will be some alteration.'"<sup>1</sup>

It is likely enough that, out of consideration for the countess and her well-known violent temper, the foregoing innocent piece of deception was practised upon her by the keeper of the Conciergerie, who soon afterwards prevailed upon her to retire to rest. Meanwhile the judges were leaving the palace, pressed upon by an immense crowd of people, who made the walls of the old building ring again with their acclamations. A thousand voices shouted out, "*Vive le Parlement!*" "*Vive le Cardinal!*" The market women, throwing themselves in the way of the departing councillors, vociferated their applause, and offered them bouquets of flowers. M. Titon, one of the reporters of the case, who, with his fellow-reporter, Dupuis de Marcé, had adopted the conclusions of the procureur-général, threw the flowers back again with marked ill-humour, to let the people see that he merited no share of this popular ovation. Something, however, more substantial than flowers were in store for M. Titon, for the king conferred on him the post of civil lieutenant in reward for his zeal.<sup>2</sup>

When MM. Target and De Bonnières, the advocates who had advised the cardinal to take his trial before the Parliament, sought to enter the record office to communicate the judgment to their client, curt old De Launay, governor of the Bastille, who had the Prince de Rohan in his charge, informed them that he had received specific orders from the Baron de Breteuil not to allow any one to speak to his prisoner. On its being represented to him that the cardinal was no longer in legal custody, since he had been formally discharged of the accusation against him by the judgment of the Parliament just rendered, and on the bystanders expressing their disapprobation by loud murmurs, he eventually permitted the two advocates to enter. "The cardinal, robed in the Roman purple," says Cagliostro, "was carried off in triumph;"<sup>3</sup> and so he was, but to the Bastille. As soon as the interview between the grand

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. pp. 120-1.

<sup>2</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. ii. p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> "Memorial for the Count de Cagliostro."

almoner and his counsel had terminated, De Launay informed him that, the Parliament having separated, he would have to return to that gloomy state prison. Hearing this, the cardinal proceeded to follow his gaoler to the carriage, while the people rushed forward, and kissed both his hands and his garments. To impose upon the crowd De Launay gave orders for the vehicle to be driven "to the hôtel,"<sup>1</sup> and the people, imagining the Palais-Cardinal to be intended, ran beside the carriage, shouting their congratulations, and only quitted it when it disappeared within the walls of the grim old fortress, every stone of which was destined in little more than three short years to be razed to the ground.

<sup>1</sup> "Correspondance Inédite de la Comtesse de Sabran," etc., p. 125.



## XXXIV.

1786. JUNE.

THE SENTENCES CARRIED OUT.—“WHAT IS RESERVED FOR THE BLOOD OF THE BOURBONS?”

THE evening following that on which judgment was pronounced, the gates of the Bastille were opened to the cardinal, who returned to the Palais-Cardinal at half-past ten o'clock at night. There he found the members of his family and the people of the *quartier* waiting to receive him, and testify their joy at his acquittal.<sup>1</sup>

Cagliostro shared the popular ovations. He, too, was conducted back in a sort of triumph to the Bastille, where he remained until he recovered possession of the portfolio and other effects, minus, however, the one hundred thousand francs in cash and bills seized in his house, he tells us, by Commissary Chénon. He left the Bastille late at night in a hackney coach. The evening, he says, was dark, the part of the city he lived in retired, but when he arrived at his house in the Rue Saint-Claude he found himself welcomed by the acclamations of thousands. The doors of his hôtel had been burst open; the courtyard, the staircase, the very apartments—indeed, every corner of the house was crowded with people.<sup>2</sup>

As for Rétaux de Villette, he himself tells us that he was recommended by both the gaoler and the executioner to take his departure as rapidly as possible—advice which he was only too ready to follow. “Outside the city gate,” he says, “a great man, who belonged, I believe, to the cardinal, took me on one side, and gave me a purse of fifty-five louis, and a note to the Abbé d’Aimar, to whom, he told me, I was to make known my future wants. When, however, I

<sup>1</sup> “Compte rendu de ce qui s’est passé au Parlement,” etc., p. 153, *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> “Memorial for the Count de Cagliostro,” p. 27.

desired to profit by these instructions, I could obtain no reply.”<sup>1</sup> Cagliostro says that Villette was banished in the ignominious sense of the term—that is, led out of prison, with a rope round his neck, by the executioner, who, when they arrived together at the city gate, gave him, first of all, a loaf, and then a kick behind, with strict injunctions never to return.<sup>2</sup> The fifty-five louis, however, were some sort of salve to the indignity offered to the person of the ex-gendarme.

Mademoiselle d’Oliva, on being told that she was adjudged “*hors de cour*,” thought it to be a prohibition against her going to Versailles any more, and faithfully promised to observe it.<sup>3</sup>

It will be readily understood that the sentences of the Parliament excited the indignation of both the king and the queen. The former inveighed against the judgment as being a most outrageous one. The cardinal, he said, knew too well the usages of the Court to have been idiot enough to believe that Madame de la Motte was admitted near the queen, or was charged with any such commission as that of the purchase of the Necklace.<sup>4</sup>

As for Marie-Antoinette, she was profoundly afflicted. “Come and weep with me, come and console your friend, my dear Polignac,” she writes; “the judgment which has just been pronounced is a shameful insult. I am bathed in tears of grief and despair. One can flatter oneself with nothing when perversity exhausts every means to crush my spirit. What ingratitude! But I shall triumph over the wicked by tripling the good which I have always tried to do. They will feel greater pleasure in afflicting me than I shall in revenging myself upon them. Come, my dear heart.”<sup>5</sup>

In writing to her sister, the queen does not restrain her indignation that the cardinal, whom she believed to be the most guilty in the affair, should have been allowed to escape. It is thus she expresses herself:—

<sup>1</sup> “*Mémoire Historique des Intrigues de la Cour*,” etc., par Rétaux de Villette, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> “*Memorial for the Count de Cagliostro*,” p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Hon. W. Eden to Mr. Pitt, in “*Lord Auckland’s Journals and Correspondence*,” vol. i. p. 132.

<sup>4</sup> “*Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette*,” by Madame Campan, vol. ii. p. 293.

<sup>5</sup> Autograph letter from Marie-Antoinette to the Duchess de Polignac, in the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches.

“1st June, 1786.

“I need not tell you, my dear sister, how indignant I feel at the judgment which has just been pronounced by the parliament. It has no respect for royalty; it is a shameful insult, and I am bathed in tears of despair. What! a man who had the audacity to lend himself to that indecent and infamous scene in the harbour, who supposed that he had an assignation with the Queen of France, with the wife of his king, that the queen had received a rose from him,<sup>1</sup> and had suffered him to throw himself at her feet, should not, when a throne is concerned, be held guilty of high treason, but should be simply regarded as one who had been deceived! It is odious and revolting. Pity me, my good sister; I did not merit this injury, I who have endeavoured to do good to all who surround me, and who only remember that I am the daughter of Marie-Thérèse, to show myself, as she recommended me when embracing me at my departure, French to the very bottom of my heart. To be so sacrificed to a perjured priest, to a lewd intriguer, how grievous! But do not think that I shall allow myself to do anything unworthy of me. I have declared that I will never seek to revenge myself beyond doubling the good which I have already done. I need not tell you that the king is indignant like myself; he exiles the cardinal to La Chaise-Dieu, and Cagliostro is expelled from France. Adieu! My children are well. We all embrace you, and press you to our hearts.”<sup>2</sup>

To Madame Campan, who knew more of the particulars of the intrigue than any one else about the queen, Marie-Antoinette mournfully said: “Make me your compliments of condolence; the intriguer who wished to ruin me, or to obtain money by abusing my name, and forging my signature, has just been acquitted. But as a Frenchwoman, also receive my compliments of condolence. A people is indeed unhappy to have for supreme tribunal a set of men who are swayed by their own passions, many of whom are

<sup>1</sup> An inadvertent mistake has been here made by the queen. It was the cardinal who received the rose. This incidental error of the queen’s furnishes a convincing proof, if any were needed, that she played no part in the midnight interview with the cardinal.

<sup>2</sup> “Lettres et Documents Inédits de Louis XVI. et Marie-Antoinette,” par M. Feuillet de Conches, vol. i. p. 161.



susceptible of corruption, while the remainder are possessed of an audacity which they are only too ready to manifest against authority, as they have just shown in so marked a manner."<sup>1</sup>

"At this epoch," says Madame Campan, "the happy days of the queen terminated. Adieu for ever to the peaceful and simple pleasures of Trianon, to the fêtes where once shone the magnificence, intellect, and good taste of the court of France ; adieu, above all, to that consideration and respect, the forms of which surround the throne, but of which the reality alone is its solid base."<sup>2</sup>

Spite of the judgment of the Parliament, the cardinal was not allowed to go entirely scot-free. The king at once wrote to the Baron de Breteuil, requiring him to demand from the cardinal the resignation of his office of grand almoner, and the surrender of the various orders the king had conferred upon him. Accompanying this letter was a *lettre-de-cachet* banishing the cardinal within three days to his abbey of the Chaise-Dieu, in the midst of the Auvergne mountains, where the king sarcastically intimated he would not be likely to receive much company. Until his departure he was commanded to see no one, except his relatives and counsel. If nothing else could be done, a stop could, at any rate, be put to receptions and ovations at the Palais-Cardinal.

On receiving the above instructions, the Baron de Breteuil who was suffering from gout in the stomach, rose, it is said, from his bed completely resuscitated at the prospect of being the bearer to the cardinal of such agreeable news.<sup>3</sup> He presented himself to the Prince de Rohan, on the morning after the release of the latter from the Bastille, and just as he had ordered his carriage intending to go round and thank his judges. The prince without appearing the least disquieted informed the minister that he would observe two of the orders of the king with the fidelity, the exactitude, and the submission which the Rohans had always shown for the sovereign's commands ; but, with regard to his resignation of the office of grand almoner, he could not confide this to M. de Breteuil, as he had had the honour of sending it to the king an hour ago

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. ii. p. 291.

<sup>3</sup> "Correspondance Inédite de la Comtesse de Sabran et du Chevalier de Boufflers," p. 125.

through the Count de Vergennes.<sup>1</sup> The minister pressed the prince to sign some further paper in reference to this resignation, observing that he did so with regret, but was obliged to obey the orders of the king his master. "Monsieur," replied the cardinal, in a nettled tone, "the king himself has already done justice on me. I have no need of an executioner." This *mot* speedily circulated all over Paris, and the minister was henceforth styled "Bourreau (executioner) Breteuil."<sup>2</sup> Louis XVI.'s minister of justice experienced a more severe rebuff when charged, a few years later, with carrying out the terms of a *lettre-de-cachet* banishing the Duke d'Orléans to his château of Villers-Cotterets for his famous protest at the "royal session," when, as Carlyle remarks, he "cut his court moorings." The baron wished to accompany the duke in his carriage, in order that, in accordance with the king's commands, he might not lose sight of him, whereupon the duke observed, with disdainful pride, "Ah, well ! jump up behind."

On June 2, the day after Cagliostro's release from the Bastille, police-inspector Brugnières entered his apartment and addressed him "in the king's name," at which ominous words his heart, he says, sank within him. The order of which Brugnières was the bearer was dated on the day preceding, and enjoined the count to leave Paris in three days, and the kingdom within three weeks. Next day Cagliostro removed to Passy, and some few days after to St.-Denis, whence he started with his wife to Boulogne-sur-Mer. On the 16th they embarked for England under circumstances the most sentimental, if we can credit the count's narrative of the affair. "The shores that I quitted," observes he, "were lined by a crowd of citizens of all classes, who blessed and thanked me for the good I had done their brethren, addressing to me the most touching farewells. The winds carried me far away from them, and I heard them no more, but I saw them again on their knees, with their hands raised towards heaven, and it was my turn to bless them, and to cry out and repeat, as though they could hear me: 'Adieu, Frenchmen ! adieu, my children ! adieu, my country !'"<sup>3</sup>

The Countess de la Motte remained for three weeks in the Con-

<sup>1</sup> "Compte rendu de ce qui s'est passé au Parlement," etc., p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> "Journals and Correspondence of Lord Auckland," vol. i. p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> "Memorial for the Count de Cagliostro."

ciergerie ignorant of the true nature of her sentence, and hoping, whatever it might be, that it would not be carried out. "At length," she tells us, "the twenty-first of June arrived, that eventful day which will live in my remembrance as long as memory itself shall live—that day the most accursed in the calendar of my misfortunes.

"One of the gaolers came to my chamber, and told me that he had come from my counsel M. Doillot, 'who,' said the deceiver, 'is now in the *greffe*, (the record office,) and desires to see you as he is going immediately into the country, which is the reason why he comes so early in the morning. It is to read you a letter which he has received from Versailles. It will be unnecessary for you to regard your dress, because he is in so great a hurry.' I threw on hastily a morning gown, and followed this impostor, who made me descend a small staircase which I used to pass every morning to go to the lodge of the *concierge*. He went before me and entered first. I pushed the door from me to get through, which I had scarce half effected when I found the door forcibly pushed to by a person on the other side with as much violence as if he wished to secure an ox, whom he was fearful would escape. Some one immediately seized me by the right arm, and dragged me into the *greffe*, where another laid hold of my other arm, and bound me fast. The first thing I observed was the *huissier* Breton holding some papers in his hand, which I conceived, as the *concierge* had told me, would be read, announcing my pretended banishment. 'No, certainly,' said I to Breton, 'I will not endure to hear so unjust a sentence, nor fall upon my knees to receive the condemnation of an iniquitous cabal, predetermined to sacrifice me!' A great number of strange persons were present, many of whom seized me rudely round the waist, and others by the legs to oblige me to kneel down, but not being able to succeed they held me suspended at a distance from the ground. While I was in this posture the *huissier* read my sentence, but the cries I uttered almost drowned his voice.

"Overpowered by superior strength my resistance became more feeble, and in this condition I was dragged to the place where the sacrifice was to be completed. Weary and faint, exhausted by my cries and the ineffectual struggles I had already made, entreating those around me to avenge the innocent and *the blood of their*



*good King Henry II.*! I at length lost all sense of reason. I could see nothing, could feel nothing which could serve to show me what they intended to do.”<sup>1</sup>

We will supplement Madame de la Motte’s own account of the infliction of the sentence passed upon her, by some extracts from contemporary memoirs which furnish several curious additional particulars.

“Madame de la Motte,” writes the Hon. Mr. Eden to Mr. Pitt, “was called up at five, and informed that the Court wished to see her. She had no suspicion of the judgment, which is not communicated here to the accused, except in the case of a capital sentence. She went in an undress, without stays, which proved convenient. Upon the registrar reading the sentence, her surprise, rage, and shrieks were beyond description. The *bourreau* (executioner) and his assistants instantly seized her, and carried her into an outer court, where she was fastened to a cart with a halter round her neck. The *bourreau* talked to her like a tooth-drawer, and assured her most politely that it would soon be over. The whipping was slight and *pro formâ*, but the branding was done with some severity. It is a good idea that the ‘V’ (*voleuse*—thief) on her shoulders stands also for Valois.”<sup>2</sup>

The Countess de Sabran, writing on the day of the occurrence to the Chevalier de Boufflers, says—“Madame de la Motte was punished to-day, at 6 o’clock in the morning, in order to avoid too great a concourse of curious people. The unfortunate woman was sleeping profoundly when they came to tell her, that her lawyer was waiting to talk with her about her affairs; they had adopted this course the more easily to effect their object. She got up, not fearing anything, put on a small petticoat and a cloak, and descended quickly to the room where she beheld eight men and M. Le Breton, the registrar, who held her sentence in his hand. At this sight she was much agitated, and tried to fly; whereupon they

<sup>1</sup> “Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself,” vol. ii. pp. 139-142.

<sup>2</sup> “Journals and Correspondence of Lord Auckland,” vol. i. p. 132. A wit of the time observed, in allusion to the countess’s descent from an illegitimate branch of the Valois, “that she ought not to have been marked on the left shoulder, as it was on this side that she hung on to the Bourbons.”—See “Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette,” etc., vol. ii. p. 52.

threw themselves upon her, and tied her little delicate hands, which people called charming and which are certainly very dexterous. ‘Why such precautions?’ she boldly asked. ‘I shall not escape you; if you were executioners, you could not treat me worse.’ She believed that it was only a question of removing her to a convent, there to pass a few years. They told her to go down on her knees, and as she was not inclined to do so, one of the executioners gave her a blow on the ham-strings which brought her to the ground. M. Le Breton then read her sentence. At the moment she heard she was going to be whipped and branded, she went into convulsions and into a fearful fit of passion, biting everything that was near her, tearing her clothes, pulling out her hair, &c. In spite of this the executioners seized her and carried her to the place of punishment. There, they put the rope round her neck, and tried in vain to undress her; she defended herself like a lion, with feet, hands, and teeth, and so obstinately that they were obliged to cut her clothes and even her chemise in order to make an end of the affair; which was very indecent, as in spite of the unreasonable hour which had been chosen with the object of keeping people away, spectators were present in very great numbers.

“She uttered loud cries, always saying: ‘Spare the blood of the Valois.’ She hurled forth curses against the Parliament, the cardinal, and even some one more sacred, and struggled so that the executioner could not perform the operation of branding her as perfectly as he wished, and scored her all down the back. After the infliction of this sanguinary punishment, they conveyed her in a hackney coach to the Salpêtrière.”<sup>1</sup>

Nougaret, author of the “Anecdotes of the reign of Louis XVI.,” says, that “on the countess being conducted before her judges, the registrar proceeded to read her sentence; on hearing which, astonishment, fury, rage, and despair seemed all of a sudden to take possession of her. Determined not to hear her sentence to the end, she flung herself on the ground and rolled about like a person convulsed, giving vent to the most horrible yells. The executioner and his assistants had the greatest difficulty in removing her to the court of the palace, where her sentence was to be inflicted. Im-

<sup>1</sup> “Correspondance Inédite de la Comtesse de Sabran et du Chevalier de Boufflers,” pp. 142-3.

mediately she perceived the instruments of punishment, she seized one of the executioners by the collar, and in a moment of frenzy bit a piece out of his hand, then sunk on the ground in convulsions far more violent than those she had recently recovered from. It was found necessary to tear her clothes off from her to mark her with the red-hot iron on her shoulders. During this operation, her cries and imprecations were redoubled. A few hours afterwards there circulated all over Paris the following epigram on the countess's pretensions to the honours of the house of Valois—"the *fleur-de-lis*, (the arms of the Valois,) it should be remembered, invariably formed part of any mark with which culprits were branded :

" À la moderne Valois  
 Qui contestera ses droits ?  
 La cour des pairs elle-même,  
 Quoi qu'en termes peu polis,  
 Lui fait par arrêt suprême,  
 Endosser les fleurs-de-lis."<sup>x</sup>

Louis Blanc, in his "History of the French Revolution," quoting mainly the Baron de Besenval and the Abbé Georgel, says : " Tied with cords, and dragged into the court of the Palais, she commenced to utter cries, not of terror, but of fury. Addressing herself to the people, she exclaimed, ' If they treat thus the blood of the Valois, what is the lot reserved for that of the Bourbons ? ' And in the midst of the groans which indignation drew from the crowd, these characteristic words were heard :—' It is my own fault that I suffer this ignominy ; I had only to say one word, and I should have been hung.' [She not only said this word, but launched forth a succession of impure and calumnious charges against the queen, couched, too, in the foulest language.] Then like as was done to Lally Tollenda!, they placed a gag in her mouth, and as she was struggling with despair in the hands of the executioner, the red-hot iron, which ought to have marked her on the shoulder, glanced off and marked her on the breast."

Rétaux de Villette asserts that " people were posted in the court of the palace to make a great noise, so that none of the public who chanced to be present might hear what Madame de la Motte said. The sentence executed, she was thrown half dead into a coach, and

<sup>x</sup> " Anecdotes du règne de Louis XVI." vol. i. p. 415, *et seq.*



driven at full gallop to the Salpêtrière,"<sup>1</sup> the prison where abandoned women were confined. One of the doors of the vehicle having flown open on the road, the officers in charge of the countess were only just in time to save her from springing out and throwing herself under the wheels. When she arrived at the Salpêtrière, she made a further attempt to destroy herself by forcing the coverlid of her miserable truckle bed into her mouth.<sup>2</sup>

On the day the Countess de Valois de la Motte underwent the infliction of the first portion of her sentence, Louis XVI. set out on a royal progress to Cherbourg, to be present at the submerging of the first cone for the foundation of the gigantic breakwater there. As this was being slowly lowered into the sea amidst shouts of *Vive le Roi!* from thousands of lusty Norman throats, we may be quite certain that, what might chance to be "in reserve for the blood of the Bourbons" was one of the very last things the king was likely to trouble himself about.

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoire Historique des Intrigues de la Cour," etc., par Rétaux de Villette, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires du Baron de Besenval," vol. iii. p. 140.

## XXXV.

AUG. 1785—JUNE 1786.

## COUNT DE LA MOTTE'S FLIGHT—COLD STEEL AND POISON.

WE must now go back a little in our narrative and see what has become of Count de la Motte since his flight from Bar-sur-Aube. Beugnot mentions that he took his place in the diligence, but he seems to have gone in one of his own carriages, and posted as fast as he could, day and night, to Boulogne, where he arrived on the night of August 20, having accomplished the journey of three hundred miles, all stoppages included, in little more than forty-eight hours, and whence at noon on the 22nd he crossed over to England.<sup>1</sup> The authorities, who had shown such remissness in not having him arrested earlier, now that he was beyond their reach began to bestir themselves, and sent orders to the officers of the marshalsea, at Boulogne and other ports, to overhaul all vessels leaving the harbour, and capture the count if they only got the chance. The officer of the marshalsea at Boulogne was lucky enough to capture the count's carriage, which had been left behind at the "Hôtel du Lion d'Argent," and in his simplicity set a man to watch it, for we know not how many days and nights, in the vain hope that the count would return and claim it.<sup>2</sup> This we need hardly say he had not the remotest intention of doing.

Of the various dangers and mishaps which befel the count on this, his second visit to England, full particulars are to be found in the narrative which he himself has written of his adventures.<sup>3</sup> He started, he tells us, with merely a hundred louis in his purse, and made with all speed for England, where, on the occasion of his

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte," p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> Autograph letter from the officer of the marshalsea at Boulogne to the Baron de Breteuil, in the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches.

<sup>3</sup> See the Countess's "Mémoires Justificatifs," and "Mémoires Inédits du Comte de la Motte."

former trip, he had left some diamonds, "which it was natural," he observes, "he should procure." His first call, therefore, was on Gray the jeweller, from whom he obtained the diamonds in question, and ere long was living on the proceeds arising from their sale. While waiting for intelligence as to the turn affairs were taking in Paris, he tells us that he visited the Haymarket Theatre one evening, and that while returning home in a hackney coach a daring attempt was made to assassinate him. His hat fortunately saved his skull. A sword was then thrust through the little window behind, and nearly spitted him to his seat. However, he seems to have escaped without bodily injury.

Under the pretence that his life was not safe in London, the count takes a journey to the north. Whether his life were really in danger it is impossible to say, but it is quite certain that his liberty was ; for there were serious thoughts at this time of kidnapping him and carrying him over to France. The proposal emanated from a spy in the pay of the French government named Le Mercier. "If," reports he, "in order to carry the individual off, cunning should not suffice, we will employ force to conduct him to some isolated spot on the banks of the Thames, where we will take care to have stationed for a fortnight previously, if necessary, one of those vessels which bring coal to London from the north. Their hulls are so thick, that it would be impossible for any one confined in the hold to make himself heard, let him cry out as loud as he will."<sup>1</sup>

Before this amiable suggestion of the spy Le Mercier could be acted upon, Count de la Motte had taken up his quarters in Lancaster, whence he went to Dublin, next to Glasgow, and finally to Edinburgh. Here, he says, he made the discovery that an attempt had been made to poison him, as he believed, at some Dublin dinner party. At any rate, he was so ill that he was obliged to keep his bed for three months. On his recovery he found that he was watched whenever he went abroad, which was likely enough to have been the case, as at this time Count d'Adhémar, ambassador of France in England, wrote, it is said, to a great personage at

<sup>1</sup> Report dated September, 1785, in the archives of the French Police, quoted by Louis Blanc in his "History of the French Revolution." Brussels, vol. ii. p. 129.



the French court, stating that Count de la Motte had withdrawn among the mountains of Scotland, where the so-called privileges of the Scotch prevented any legal seizure of his person being made; nevertheless he, the ambassador, had found ten well-disposed hardy mountaineers who would undertake to capture the count and carry him over to France, for which service, as they would probably have to employ as much force as seduction in the accomplishment of it, and incur the risk of being hanged, they demanded a thousand louis each. The queen, having heard of this letter, at once said that even if it were necessary to give double this amount, there ought not to be a moment's hesitation, since the presence of the Count de la Motte was the one thing wanting to thoroughly unveil a most abominable conspiracy and to punish the authors of it. Orders were thereupon given to place the requisite sum at the ambassador's disposal.<sup>1</sup> By this time, however, the count had left Edinburgh, and gone south to Newcastle-on-Tyne, where, he pretends, the capuchin, McDermott, whose acquaintance he made when last in England, bribed by the handsome offer of ten thousand pounds, attempted to poison him on several occasions.<sup>2</sup> We do not believe a word of this; the French government were no doubt anxious to secure the count's presence at the approaching trial, and would have been only too glad of a chance of kidnapping him; but that they, or indeed any one else, wished to put him out of the way, is extremely improbable, for it was his evidence, and not his silence, that they desired to ensure.

About this time, namely, early in April, 1786, a woman named Costa, wife of one of the ambassador's spies, who had succeeded in scraping acquaintance with Count de la Motte, crossed over to Paris with a letter from the count to M. Doillot, Madame de la Motte's counsel, in which he stated that he could make the innocence of his wife clear as day if he only dared come forward. The count insinuated that he had a letter of the cardinal's, inquiring of him whether he had succeeded in disposing of the diamonds.<sup>3</sup> On the woman Costa's return to England she went, according to her

<sup>1</sup> "Compte rendu de ce qui s'est passé au Parlement," etc., pp. 65, 66.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte," pp. 103, *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. ii. p. 33.

own account, by direction of the Paris police to Count d'Adhémar, who bade her tell her husband to take a house at Newcastle-on-Tyne, so as to facilitate the drugging of the count and conveying him on board a French ship which was lying ready in the harbour under the command of one Surbois, an *exempt* of the French police. Madame Costa asserted that her husband had already received a bribe of a thousand guineas for this purpose (less a commission of sixty guineas which the ambassador's secretary deducted for his little pickings out of the affair), and had been promised nine thousand guineas more when the count was safe on board.<sup>1</sup> Costa, however, seems to have let the count into the secret, and they came up to London together to work upon the ambassadorial exchequer as best as they could.

Arrived there on the 18th of May, Count de la Motte tells us that shortly afterwards he meets the French ambassador at Lady Spencer's and proceeds to draw him out. From what the ambassador lets fall, the count comes to the conclusion that the government now wish to get him out of the way simply to ensure his silence. "Your presence and deposition," remarks the ambassador, "would entirely overthrow all that has hitherto been done, and the business would take quite a different turn." He tells the count that, according to the advice of the Duke of Rutland, they could have seized him when he was at Dublin. They thought, however, they had sufficient evidence to convict the cardinal without his testimony. Next day the ambassador observes to him: "It was feared that you would have espoused the cardinal's cause in preference to that of the queen. You know your position: the De Rohans accuse you of having run away with the remainder of the Necklace." He then suggests that the count, by surrendering himself can do himself no harm, and might do the queen some service, and undertakes to procure him a passport in eight or ten day at the farthest. De la Motte of course wants money, or, at any rate, hints that he does, and D'Adhémar promises him five or six thousand livres. It is then arranged between them what the count is to say in his defence. He is on no account to state that the countess had access to the queen; neither is he to mention

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. pp. 393-4.

anything about the letters said to have been sent by the queen to the cardinal. De la Motte, playing with the ambassador like a cat does with a mouse, does not see how he can acquit the queen; whereupon the ambassador glides off to the cardinal, tells the count to repeat all the indecent speeches he has heard him make respecting her majesty, who will not be displeased at his so doing. He next advises him to say nothing about De Polignac, Coigny, Vandreuil, Dillon, or Fersen—all belonging to the queen's society. "As to the Necklace," continues D'Adhémar, "I would advise you to say that you are persuaded the cardinal gave it, partly or wholly, to your wife. The countess will never allow that to be the case, but I am certain it really was so. Finally, you must not say a single word respecting the Baron de Breteuil." The count suggests giving up the countess's necklace which Gray had set, and which by this time must certainly have been in pawn, if not sold outright. This, D'Adhémar says, would certainly please the king. Then advising the count to change his name, and to avoid the tattling of the *Courrier de l'Europe*, the ambassador brings the interview to a close.

Other interviews follow; the count no doubt bleeding the ambassador from time to time pretty freely. Although he talked enough about surrendering himself, it is tolerably certain he had no intention of running that risk. Vergennes, moreover, believing that the count's presence might damage the cardinal's cause, received the proposition with coldness, and did not send the required passport. D'Adhémar on one occasion showed Count de la Motte the draft of a letter which he had sent to the king through the Count de Vergennes, wherein he informed his majesty that the count desired to surrender himself and justify the proceedings of his wife. "I have, however, been tricked and betrayed by Vergennes," he remarked, "who kept back the letter until it was too late, for judgment has now been pronounced." D'Adhémar tells the count that his presence in Paris is now more necessary than ever. "The procureur-général is going to prefer a fresh complaint against the cardinal for 'criminal attempts' upon the queen, for the language he has used, the letters he has exhibited, the pretended meetings by night, &c., and the Parliament will be by statute obliged to try the Necklace affair over again in connection with the



new charge." On leaving the ambassador the count hastened to a neighbouring coffee-house, where he sees a copy of the judgment to which M. d'Adhémar had just referred, in the *Morning Post* newspaper, and at once writes a savage letter to M. de Vergennes, copies of which he sends to the English and French press.

A few days afterwards, the ambassador's secretary tells the count that the queen has determined to abandon the new prosecution, on account of the scandal it would create, but will contrive to deprive the cardinal of his blue ribbon and places at court, and banish him to herd with monks in the savage parts of Auvergne. At this news, which indicates a stoppage of further supplies, Count de la Motte is inconsolable, and feels, moreover, that he has been duped. To let him down as gently as possible, the court protection is promised him. For the future, however, the ambassador is "not at home" to the count's morning calls; neither does he take any notice whatever of the count's numerous letters.<sup>1</sup>

The count, now grown indignant, threatens all manner of exposures, and with his letters to the newspapers becomes a complete nuisance to the representatives of the French government in England; the ambassador, however, escapes further persecution, for just at this moment he is summoned to Paris by his government, who, after a time, relieve him of his diplomatic functions, and appoint the Marquis de la Luzerne, brother of the old Bishop of Langres, in his stead.

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte," pp. 152, *et seq.*

## XXXVI.

1786. JUNE—DEC.

THE SALPÊTRIÈRE.—TRUCKLE-BED AND PRISON FARE.—  
THE COUNT THREATENS THE FRENCH COURT.

“As soon as Madame de la Motte arrived at the Salpêtrière,” remarks Madame Robin, the then superior general of the hospital, “she was taken to the registry where all our prisoners are enrolled before they are sent to their several prisons: she remained near three-quarters of an hour apparently without any knowledge of what passed—totally insensible. A little after she came to herself, I begged her to search her pockets and let me take her earrings. She presented to me her right ear; she could not speak, and she was so disfigured that her shape scarce appeared to be human, yet she seemed patient as a lamb going to the fold. The *huissiers* then crammed her into the same hackney-coach, and conveyed her to the hall of the Salpêtrière. Before she entered the prison itself, she was taken extremely ill, and we thought she would never recover.

“We seized the first moment when she appeared to be recovering, and caused her to be placed by some of the sisters in a bed one of the prisoners had given her, which was fortunate for Madame de la Motte, otherwise she would have been under the necessity of lying in a bed full of vermin with six of the poor old women.”

“The next day,” says Madame de la Motte, “a number of girls, habited in the dress of daughters of charity, came to visit me in crowds; they appeared and disappeared like lightning. The officiating sister, Geneviève, whom I shall never forget, conducted me to a small court to take the air, and left me to return to her business. I was scarcely seated when I saw a very great number of poor women coming out of a gate into this same court, making a most dreadful clattering with their wooden shoes. As soon as they

saw me they exclaimed, 'Oh ! there she is ; there is the lady in the court.' These poor creatures, whose appearance spoke a variety of wretchedness, approached and invited me to see the place destined for my reception. Some of these women took me by the arm and led me to what they called the dormitory, the place where they slept and where they worked. I had no sooner entered the door of this infernal mansion, than I recoiled with terror, but there were many women behind, who prevented me from running back, otherwise I should have fallen, so great was my horror at sight of this hall, containing one hundred and twenty-seven women, whose wretchedness may more easily be imagined than described. I shrunk back at the sight of this hideous spectacle, while big tears rolled down my cheeks, and with a voice stifled by the effect of grief, I said, like a child insensible to what passed around me, 'Poor Valois ! oh, poor Valois !'

"It will be extremely difficult for me to paint the horrors of this dreadful mansion ; every effort is inadequate to give with sufficient strength of colouring the interior description of this house of misery and its wretched inhabitants. One would have imagined from their conduct and behaviour that these women had been reared in the forests, for they were almost as wild and savage as tigers, having always in their hands either stones, bottles, or chairs, ready to throw at the head of any one that displeased them. Every day teemed with new squabbles ; they frequently fought together, and would sometimes beat one another almost to death. This prison was moreover a seminary of vice and depravity even too shocking to mention, and, instead of a house for the salutary correction of their souls, may more justly be denominated the place of their destruction.

"I will attempt to give a description of this abode of horrors. The entry is by a small court about twenty feet broad and forty-four in length. Opposite the entrance doors are seven dark cabins under a gallery built upon pilasters. These cabins, or rather dungeons, are in general between five and six feet long and four and a half broad ; in each there is a straw bed, a mattress, without any furniture, not so much as a chair. Those women who come thither, and have money, may purchase these cabins of the old prisoners. In each of these cabins is a window about a foot



and a half square, with no glass, but very thick wooden shutters, fastened with massive iron bolts. Below these shutters is another small opening to let the air into these cabins. At the bottom of this court, to the right, are four stone steps, after which is a little passage which divides the great dormitory from the little court. On the right is a small court leading to the great one, to serve as a walk for one hundred and twenty-seven females, eighty feet long and near sixty wide : the walls about sixty-two feet high. Opposite the entrance gate of the court leading to the dormitory is a chamber for one sister, to which there is an ascent of five steps.

“Facing the little court is the gate of the dormitory, which is very low. This dormitory is sixty feet long and thirteen broad : the ceiling fortified with large strong joists ; the wall strengthened in the same manner. In this dormitory are six beds about five feet in length, composed also of a truss of straw, a mattress, and two coarse cloth coverings. Round the beds are benches and some chairs. The right side of the window is filled with women at work, who have purchased these places, as I also paid for mine, for I had been obliged to sit down on the ground in the court, all the places, forty in number, being occupied. The walls are entirely surrounded with thick shelves, on which the women put their victuals. Beneath this dormitory is another, the half of which is below ground, where there are three or four beds in a better air than the others. Upon the right is a corridor, three feet broad and about seventy-five feet long, in which there are thirteen cabins much the same as those of which I have before spoken, with low unglazed windows and iron bars, so that the miserable inhabitants have no defence from the inclemency of the seasons, but the rain, wind, hail, and snow beat in upon the cabins. By mounting upon the window sills, you may see even to the fourth court, which is called the Court Sainte-Claire, where there are always a great number of people. Facing the dormitory is a small staircase conducting to a particular little court which leads into a square opposite to the chapel of this same prison. On the right is the cell of the superior sister, Martha. Going out on the right you come to a court leading to the kitchen, where are three doors to enter the Salpêtrière, on both sides of which there are turnkeys. As you come out from the Salpêtrière there are seven courts, and in every

court there are a great number of turnkeys. On the left, opposite the entrance passage by the Court Sainte-Claire, are two porticos, leading to the three gates of the Salpêtrière. There are in all nine courts, which you have to pass before you can leave the hospital.

"The inhabitants of this den have an old petticoat for clothing, and a gown of course grey cloth, stockings of the same kind, a coarse shift, a pair of wooden shoes, and a cap. Every woman is allowed thrice a week three ounces of boiled beef, on the other days about two pennyworth of cheese, with fat broth, and five pounds of bread each day. Such is the regulation allowance for the sustenance of these wretches. Women, who before have scarce ever had a needle in their hands, are here taught to work in a short time. Some are taught to stitch wrist-bands, others to make shirts and all kinds of plain work; their labours are, however, of no advantage to them."<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the countess is doing dreary penance in the Salpêtrière, and her husband is haunting the London "hells," waiting the return of the French ambassador from Paris, to know whether it was intended to do *him* what he styles "justice," a paragraph, no doubt instigated by the count himself, appears in some of the London newspapers, reproaching him for his timidity in not publishing a certain justificatory memoir which had been talked about for some time past. Indeed, so notorious had the matter become, that the Duke of Dorset writes to Mr. Eden (afterwards Lord Auckland), special envoy at the French court, under date December 7, 1786—a week before the appearance of the paragraph in question—informing him that the Count de la Motte was about to publish a memoir in England respecting the Necklace affair, which, as it would be certain to contain nothing but falsehoods and calumny, he advises the French government to get answered immediately on its appearance by some clever fellow, and suggests the editor of the *Courrier de l'Europe*, who is understood to be in their pay, as a likely sort of person for the task.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. p. 143, *et seq.* The Salpêtrière at the present day is a refuge for aged and infirm women, and accommodates no less than 4369 inmates. Madame de la Motte's cell is one of the lions of the place shown to visitors.

<sup>2</sup> "Journals and Correspondence of Lord Auckland," vol. i. p. 397.

The count, who is getting rather fond of using his pen, finding it a convenient weapon wherewith to insinuate his threats, addresses a long letter to the papers in reply to the aforesaid paragraph, and stating in explicit terms what he intends to do if this "justice," for which he is so anxious, is not speedily done him. It did not, perhaps, occur to the count that the only justice he was entitled to demand was that already meted out to him by the highest legal tribunal in his country, namely, the Court of Parliament, which had sentenced him to the scourge, the branding-iron, and the galleys. This letter of the count's we subjoin :

"To the Printer of the *Morning Chronicle*.

"Sir,

"In consequence of a letter inserted in your print of the 13th instant, I think myself called upon to interrupt a silence which I meant to keep till the return of Comte d'Adhémar ; but such a conduct, in the actual state of affairs, would only serve to give weight and add importance to the groundless reproaches of timidity and indifference laid to my charge. It is incumbent on me, in this answer to your correspondent, first to account for the motives that have hitherto engaged me to silence, and then to give a slight idea of the memorial I propose to lay before the public for my justification.

"I arrived in London on the 18th of last May, and have never since moved from this capital. At that period—previous, as it appears from the above date, to the conclusion of the famous process—I had frequent interviews with the French ambassador. My memorial will contain a circumstantial detail of what passed between us at each appointment. From the line of conduct which his excellency struck out for me, as well with respect to M. de Vergennes as to my comportment before the Parliament of Paris, and from the secret motives imparted to me of the various attempts of taking me forcibly away, it will self-evidently appear that the ambassador looked upon my departure not only as certain, but that my presence, earnestly desired, and zealously solicited by the most illustrious personages (whose names I shall mention), would undoubtedly delay the sentence, and make the whole affair wear a different aspect. What was the result? The very person-



ages alluded to, like Comte d'Adhémar, were imposed upon by a minister who, in appearance, and for form sake, feigned to second their endeavours, but who in reality overturned the structure, and brought it to the ground by his wily manœuvres and contributed alone to extricate the cardinal from the disagreeable situation in which he was implicated. May a complete disgrace reward the former for his officiousness! This is my ardent wish, and his enemies will not fail to accelerate it by their reiterated solicitations. But I resume the thread of my subject.

"Notwithstanding all the instructions he had received, the ambassador could not, no more than myself, foresee a sentence such as has been awarded. He was the first to acquaint me with it, and at the same time hinted at plans which could not but turn greatly to my advantage, since they tended to give me an opportunity (which was the first wish of my heart, and for the obtaining of which I exerted every nerve) of appearing before the Parliament, and entering upon my justification. His excellency further assured me, that I should meet with powerful friends, whose patronage would counterpoise all the credit and combined efforts of the house of Rohan.

"As those projects were never called into execution, and as the supreme power, apprehensive of a minute explanation, pronounced the cardinal's fate, I thought it expedient, considering the promises made to me, to wait the ambassador's arrival, no ways doubting but that, in consequence of his account of my conduct throughout the whole business, some regard would be paid to it, and justice done me. But if the answer I expect from his excellency be not satisfactory—if my just demand be not acceded to, then I shall look upon myself as free to act, and demonstrate by a detail, equally true and well supported, by letters which I fortunately have in my possession, and which will corroborate my assertion, why Mademoiselle d'Oliva was chosen by me to play a part for half an hour, not on the terrace, as was purposely given out, but in the interior of the garden of Versailles. The world shall be informed of the grand object of this rehearsal, as well as the catastrophe projected for the first night's representation, which, by-the-by, did not take place, on account of the principal performer having been warned, not indeed of all the snares laid to entrap him, but secretly put on

his guard, not to expose himself imprudently in places where he was liable to be surprised by his enemies, who would snatch at every opportunity to effect his ruin. It will appear that, in consequence of this caution, it was thought desirable to alter the plan, that it gave rise to the purchasing of the Necklace (for which I shall account in the clearest manner *by making special mention of its real owner*, who made my wife a present of some of the most brilliant diamonds, which I sold in London as my property), and kept by much the more considerable part, which may be worn in different manners, without ever being known by the jewellers : and why ? By the concatenation of those circumstances, which happened pending the process, my wife and I were abandoned and inhumanly sacrificed. These illustrations will convince the public that certain caricature print-makers whom I know, and consequently despise, aimed at deceiving the judgment, and prepossessing them against me, by putting in my hand a Necklace, of which I had a very small share.

“That the readers may have nothing to wish for, and in order to point out to them the causes of so tardy a revenge (which was hatching without success, ever since the death of Louis XV.), I begin my account at the era of the cardinal’s embassy at Vienna, and trace every event that has taken place till the final decision of the famous affair.

“I am not to be told that my memorial, if published, will, by the secret and curious anecdotes it contains, raise against me a host of powerful foes, who will not fail to seek for, and meet with, sufficient opportunity to wreak their vengeance on me. But what of that ? My intentions shall be fulfilled ; and, whatever be my fate, I shall have the comfort of having left behind me an authentic justification, and of having unveiled the whole of the intrigue. And who knows but I may be fortunate enough to hear one day or other, for the good of my country, that my memorial has opened the eyes of him who has been kept so long in the dark ! But for that I shall be told the memorial must not reach him, and all the avenues will be strongly beset. I am aware of it. But on the other hand, I shall observe that there exists a powerful party, whose interests it is to forward it, who have been long employed in working a mine, which only waits a favourable opportunity for ex-

plosion. To hasten this, if my memorial has, as it were, the effects of a match, I shall look upon all the misfortunes I have encountered as the path leading directly to that event, and shall think myself sufficiently rewarded for the injuries and persecutions I have experienced.

“After this declaration, sir, I trust I shall be no longer reproached with a timidity unknown to me ; and that, considering the infamous manner in which I have been treated, no one will blame my just resentment.

“I am, very sincerely, Sir,

“Your very humble servant,

“COUNT DE LA MOTTE.

“No. 10, Charlotte Street,

“Rathbone Place.”<sup>1</sup>

That this letter may not fail in its effect, it is again published in the same newspaper, two days afterwards, *in the original French*. One can well conceive that the mail-bags that day carried a goodly number of copies of the journal in question to the French capital, and there can hardly be a doubt but that the count's letter, coupled with the note which the Duke of Dorset had addressed to the English ambassador at the court of Versailles, and which had been communicated to the French government, created considerable consternation among the party of the queen.

<sup>1</sup> *Morning Chronicle* newspaper, December 29, 1786.



## XXXVII.

DEC., 1786—JUNE, 1787.

MYSTERIOUS HINTS GIVEN TO THE COUNTESS TO EFFECT HER ESCAPE.  
—SHE RESOLVES ON ATTEMPTING IT.

It must have been about this time that hints were given to Madame de la Motte with reference to attempting to escape from her confinement. Her own version of the manner in which these hints were given is like most of her statements about herself, strongly tinged with the romantic ; still it is tolerably certain that hints of some kind or another were given to her. She fixes the date when these overtures commenced not later than the beginning of December, 1786 ; but considering that she deferred her attempt to escape until July of the following year, we should be inclined to fix it at some later period, and certainly subsequent to the time when the French court were made acquainted with the letters just referred to. However, we will let her tell the story in her own words :

“It was about the latter end of November or the commencement of December, 1786, that one of the soldiers, doing duty as sentinel in the court of the Salpêtrière, to see that the women made no holes in the dormitory to escape by the aqueducts, passed the end of his musket through a broken part of the wall and attempted to touch Angelica, who waited upon me as a servant, and who was sentenced to be confined for life in the Salpêtrière. ‘What do you want with me?’ asked Angelica. ‘Is not your name Angelica?’ said he, softly ; ‘are you not the person who waits upon Madame de la Motte?’ ‘Yes,’ replied she. ‘Very well,’ said he ; ‘I heard many lords and ladies yesterday, in the Palais Royal, mention your name as being the person who is so attentive to her. Tell me if you want anything. I always carry about me an ink-stand, paper, &c., which I will furnish you with, as I know you have not permission to write. Prepare your letters, if you wish to write to anybody, and I will take charge of them.’

"Angelica thanked him for his kindness, but frankly confessed she could neither read nor write.

"'No matter,' replied he, 'there is your mistress, Madame de la Motte; I would advise you to get her to write for you to the different ladies who come here, and beg her to recommend you to their goodness.'

"Two days after this, about three in the morning, the same soldier again touched Angelica with his musket, and gave her a packet of gilt paper, a large bundle of quills, a bottle of ink, and a letter for herself. 'Madame de la Motte will read it to you,' said he. Next day Angelica brought me the letter, at every line of which I was struck with such astonishment that I could scarce believe my eyes. This mysterious letter was as follows:

"Assure yourself, Mademoiselle Angelica, that I shall be extremely happy if I can be instrumental in procuring your liberty. Command me, and believe that I shall seize every opportunity of being useful to you [and, immediately preceding the last line,] 'UNFORTUNATE, put this letter before the light—'TIS UNDERSTOOD—be sure to be discreet.'

"After having read to Angelica so much of this letter as concerned her, I made use of some pretext to send her to the dormitory, and the moment I was alone put the letter to the light, when writing began to appear as if by the power of magic. At length all was visible, and the following words astonished my eyes:

"'You are earnestly exhorted to keep up your spirits, and to take proper nourishment, that you may have sufficient strength to support the fatigue of your journey. PEOPLE are now intent upon changing your condition. Speak your wishes, and mention the day you are willing to depart, that a post-chaise may be prepared, which you will find at the corner of the king's garden. Be discreet; 'tis your interest to be so. Confide implicitly in the bearer, without entertaining the smallest suspicion.'

"Judge of my astonishment on perusing this mysterious paper! Surely, said I to myself, I am awake, and in sober certainty of the truth of what I see. But who can be the persons who have thus interested themselves in my misfortunes? This singular expression, 'It is understood,' was never used by any person but myself, the cardinal, and the queen. Perhaps they both, repenting of

what they have done, ashamed of having the weakness to suffer me to be sacrificed, at this moment wish to give me liberty."

To this letter Madame de la Motte tells us she wrote an answer to the effect that she was anxious to escape from her confinement, and begged her unknown correspondent to aid her in the attempt. In due course, she received the following reply :

"PEOPLE have reflected ; endeavour to procure the model of the key that will open easily that side where you wish to go out. Act for the best, and compose yourself."

"For two months," she says, "I laboured at the attempt, and at length succeeded in making two designs—one small and the other large—in which I thought I had fortunately delineated the wards of the key, and which, the moment I perceived to be perfect, I enclosed in a letter, which I gave to Angelica to convey to the soldier, who, about a fortnight afterwards, brought a key made exactly after the paper model. I had the patience to wait two whole days without sufficient resolution to make the experiment ; but on Sunday, between six and seven in the morning, when Angelica and myself were together in the gallery, the opportunity seeming favourable, with a trembling hand and palpitating heart I applied the key to the lock, when, gracious heaven ! what was my surprise and joy at finding the door open ! We both endeavoured as much as possible to conceal our emotions, and proceeded to try whether this same key would open the other three doors. In the afternoon of the same day I pulled off my shoes and crept softly along to the second door, which, to my great joy, was also obsequious to my touch. I shut it again, ascended the steps softly by three at a time, all in a tremble for fear of discovery, found, as I wished, all was fast and everything quiet. I then attempted to open the door on the other side of the gallery near the second dormitory. This I did with wonderful facility, and with as little trouble as I had opened the others."<sup>1</sup>

Strange to say that although, according to the countess's own account, she was in possession of the means of escape by the end of February (1787) at the latest, she took no steps to profit by them until three months afterwards, pretending that, in the interim, she

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. pp. 143-197. We suspect the whole of this key business to be fudge.



had been engaged in using her influence with persons of condition to procure the release of her attendant, Angelica, when all the while she had the means of releasing her in her own possession. However, the girl eventually obtains her pardon, and madame has now leisure to attend to her own affairs.

It was on the 1st of May that Angelica was set at liberty. On the 13th the countess, who has long since found means of carrying on communications with her former friends, sends a letter by the hands of "a young *confidante*," whom she has managed to gain over, to an old lover of hers, the Baron de Crussol, the same who procured the Count de la Motte his post in the Count d'Artois' body-guard, and who, with his brother, the Bailli de Crussol, were of the queen's set at Little Trianon. The baron played *Basile* in Beaumarchais' comedy, "The Barber of Seville," at the private theatre there, when Marie-Antoinette performed the part of *Rosina*. This letter, which is all love and tenderness, contains the customary appeal of the De Valois for pecuniary assistance. In the course of it the countess tells the baron that the Duchess de Duras, "*dame du palais*" to the queen, "a very virtuous and worthy woman," is going to pay her a visit next week, and then follows this characteristic passage: "I shall see her alone; the public must not know of it, as it might get talked about on account of my being forbidden to see any one *for fear I should speak*."<sup>1</sup> To return, however, to the countess's narrative. "I reflected within myself," says she, "that if I should run the hazard of going out in the dress of the Salpêtrière, I should be easily discovered in the event of being met by any of the sisters. I conceived also that a male habit would be more favourable for my escape, and communicated this to my unknown correspondent, to whom I wrote:

" 'I wish to have a large blue coat, a flannel waistcoat, black breeches, a pair of half-boots, a round high-crowned hat, to make me appear taller, a switch, and a pair of leather gloves.'

" All these the guard brought me about ten or twelve days after; he carried the great-coat under his cloak, the waistcoat in his pocket, and the switch in the barrel of his musket; and about two nights after he brought the half-boots and a man's shirt. Thus

<sup>1</sup> "Lettres et Documents Inédits de Louis XVI. et Marie-Antoinette," par M. Feuillet de Conches, vol. i. p. 171.

furnished with wings for my flight, I was wholly intent on my game, and, what is not a little singular, without the least fear of not being able to effect my escape ; not one shadow of doubt presented itself to my imagination, nothing gave me the least uneasiness ; I felt myself quite confident of success, and I found myself much happier than I had been for a long time. I reflected that I was under the immediate protection of the queen, and would not suffer myself to entertain a doubt that it was the queen herself, and no one else, who had taken this interest in my behalf.

“After a time, however, a feeling of apprehension came across my mind and led me to suspect the sincerity of my unknown correspondent. Surely, I thought to myself, this cannot be a plot concerted to lull me to security that I may afterwards be more easily got rid of. It cannot be so ; they really wish to render me service, there can be no doubt of it, since I have the key and the proper dress ; but whither will this post-chaise conduct me ?—probably to some convent ; and does the queen suppose that I can be happy there ? I will never consent to go to a convent, and only to some place where I can be free—where I am at liberty.

“About this time I was not a little surprised by a visit from M. de Crosne, lieutenant of police. About six o’clock one afternoon I was conducted to Sister Martha’s apartment, where I saw M. de Crosne, with M. Martin, secretary, and another person who was a stranger. M. de Crosne at first did not know me ; he appeared much surprised and affected to find me so reduced, so altered for the worse, and his sensibility deeply affected me. I read in his face, as in a mirror, how different I then was from what I had been when he formerly knew me. Affliction had worn me down almost to a skeleton ; my eyes were languid and inanimate. [The countess used to pride herself on the killing effect of her eyes.] I was, as it were, but the fleeting shadow of what I had once been in the days of my prosperity. I stood for some moments unable to articulate a single syllable. At length, awaking from my reverie, I saluted him, when the amiable man kindly inquired if there was anything I was in want of, as if so, he would give the necessary orders.

“At these words I quite lost myself, and forgetting every consideration that should have restrained me, I drew near him, and re-

peated, 'Want anything? Oh, sir, it is too much to bear—that I should be thus confined!' M. de Crosne, greatly affected, would not suffer me to recite the melancholy catalogue of my woes, which I was entering into with all the energy that grief inspired.

"I could not help thinking that M. de Crosne was sent hither expressly to see me, and the more I reflected upon this visit of his, the more suspicious I became. I began to see that they were fearful I should say too much, and that it was judged expedient rather to endeavour to soothe than drive me to extremities; for if I had really any ill-will, any grudge towards the queen, I thought to myself, neither the Baron de Breteuil nor the lieutenant of police would take the pains to favour me with the slightest attention."<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted that it was at this period, namely, early in the month of May, that the Duchess de Polignac and her sister-in-law, the Countess Diane, went to England, ostensibly to drink the Bath waters, but really, it is believed, to come to terms with Count de la Motte through the medium of their intimate friend the Duchess of Devonshire.<sup>2</sup> One may here quote a bit of court gossip contained in a letter dated Versailles, June 27, 1787, and written to Stanislaus Poniatowski, king of Poland, to the effect that, on the occasion of this visit, the Duchess de Polignac paid Count de la Motte four thousand louis for certain letters said to have been written by the queen. If there is any truth in the story, these were in all probability copies of the letters purporting to have been written by Marie-Antoinette, together with the cardinal's replies, and which were afterwards published in the Appendix to

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. pp. 205, 212.

<sup>2</sup> "Journals and Correspondence of Lord Auckland," vol. i. p. 420. There are certain discrepancies with respect to the date of the duchess's visit. Mr. Storer, writing to the Hon. Mr. Eden, on May 11, 1787, says, "the Polignacs have arrived; on Tuesday they went to the opera," etc. In contradiction to this we have a letter written by Marie-Antoinette, and dated April 11, exactly a month previous, evidently addressed to the duchess while she was in England, and inquiring whether she had found any benefit from the Bath waters. It is possible that a wrong date has been affixed to the last-mentioned letter subsequently to its having been written, for Marie-Antoinette left most of her letters undated. See "Lettres et Documents Inédits de Louis XVI. et Marie-Antoinette," vol. i.



the Countess's Life.<sup>1</sup> Of this visit of the Duchess de Polignac we shall again have occasion to speak.

At length the countess takes her final resolution, and fixes upon some day between the 8th and the 11th of June, either at eleven o'clock in the morning or six o'clock in the evening, for her escape. The arrangement was this: the guard was to disguise himself as a waggoner, and with a whip in his hand, was to walk round the King's garden (the Jardin des Plantes) at the times specified on each of the above-mentioned four days. The attendant who had succeeded Angelica, and whom the countess was obliged to take into her confidence, begged that she might be permitted to accompany her. After some hesitation, the countess gave her consent.

<sup>1</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. ii. p. 157.

## XXXVIII.

1787. JUNE—JULY.

THE COUNTESS'S ESCAPE.—A LAST VISIT TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF  
BAR-SUR-AUBE.

ON the morning of the 11th of June, the last of the four appointed days, "Marianne and I, before our departure, took each of us a cup of coffee to revive our spirits and give us courage. I then proceeded to open the doors, three of which I fastened again with my key, and the fourth Marianne pulled towards her. Marianne, who knew the house perfectly well, took the shortest turnings she could find, believing that I was following her. I, however, managed to lose sight of her; nevertheless, I did not lose my courage, but passed on until I found myself in a large hall wherein were a great number of small beds in each of which was a child. After having cast my eyes round me, I inquired of the sisters the way out. I did not well understand the directions they gave me, but, after traversing many courts, found myself at length in a spacious court among a number of people who had come to gratify their curiosity with a sight of this prison. I followed a party who entered the chapel to view it, taking care to mix myself up with the rest of the company. After addressing a fervent prayer to heaven to inspire me with courage, I soon had the gratification of finding myself outside those doors which I had always looked on as impassable. Here I saw no one but the sisters, to whom I gave some money as though I were an ordinary visitor, and at length fortunately reached the high road. Here after some delay I discovered my good Marianne waiting for me near the river.<sup>1</sup>

"The King's garden was crowded with people, but I fortunately

<sup>1</sup> It was commonly believed at the time, that the authorities not only connived at the countess's escape, but abetted it. It is said that at the moment of her departure from the Salpêtrière, the superior jokingly said to her, "Farewell, Madame, take great care you are not remarked" (meaning also re-marked with the branding-iron).

managed to escape observation, and leaped into the boat to Marianne, who was already there with two strange gentlemen. Fearful of a discovery, I made signs to her not to speak to me. The two gentlemen were seated; but lest my awkwardness in my new habiliments should be discovered, I remained standing. At length we gained the opposite bank, and upon our landing near the arsenal, that hideous place, the Bastille, opposed itself to my view. Marianne conducted me through byways and narrow streets until we found a hackney-coach which took us to Charenton. On arriving there we stopped at a bootmaker's to exchange my half-boots for a pair of shoes, after which we hired a cabriolet, which conveyed us a distance of seven leagues. We then alighted, and walked till half-past eleven o'clock at night.

"We slept at a village called Maison-Rouge, and at six the next morning pursued our journey on foot till ten in the evening, when we stopped a few hours to repose ourselves. Here I inquired whether I could have a cabriolet. I could not, however, be thus accommodated. We were, therefore, obliged to take a cart, which conducted us about two miles from Provins. About five in the evening we stopped at the first cabaret and dined, and after dinner, fearful of being suspected by the marshalsea, I despatched Marianne to purchase women's apparel. She returned with a jacket of narrow-striped red cotton, an apron of the same stuff, a petticoat striped blue and white, a pair of leather shoes, such as are worn by peasants, and a pair of very small buckles. We departed from this inn at six the same evening.

"The town of Provins was about sixteen leagues from Paris, but I did not judge it prudent to take the coach from here, there being no other conveyance besides the post, which I wished as much as possible to avoid. We proceeded towards the back of the town, where we met a great number of officers walking together, one of whom I overheard say: 'Oh! there's a woman in man's clothes.' When they drew nearer they pulled off their hats, and begged permission to accompany me. One of these gentlemen's professions of service were so very profuse that I found it extremely difficult to engage him to desist from following me. 'You are,' said he, 'some young girl but just escaped from a convent, and your lover is certainly near at hand waiting for you in a post-chaise.' 'If such is



your opinion, sir,' replied I, 'it is very impolite of you to think of following me, particularly as you have no right to expect that I should confess to you, if you should be right in your conjecture.' At this he withdrew. I turned towards the left, under a hill, and not being able to find a place more retired, we concealed ourselves under a verdant recess, where a brook of water ran down towards the meadow. Here Marianne and I assumed our new disguise, which made us appear exactly like peasants, each of us holding in our arms a little basket of eggs, and a pound of butter neatly covered with a piece of linen, which was bought for that purpose. I threw my former apparel into the brook, putting stones into the coat pockets and the hat, that they might sink more easily, and that no trace of my flight might be discovered. We went five leagues on foot the same evening, and stopped, about eleven o'clock, at the first house of entertainment in the suburbs of Nogent,<sup>1</sup> which is about two-and-twenty leagues from Paris. Here again I was so much fatigued that, after our supper, poor Marianne was obliged to put me upon her shoulders, and bring me into the cow-house, and lay me on the straw, for there was neither bed nor chamber.

"The day after, about seven, we hired a cart, which conveyed us directly to Troyes, about nine leagues from Nogent, where we slept till four the next morning, when we again pursued our journey on foot. On our road we met a waggoner, who civilly asked us to get up into his cart, a proposal which we readily accepted. He conveyed us to the town where he lived, about two leagues distant, but this honest rustic would receive no money;<sup>2</sup> he would have no other recompense than a promise of marriage, which I was constrained to give him. I told him that I and my cousin Marianne had lived at Chaumont, in Champagne, and gave him a fictitious name and address. On parting with him we were fortunate enough to procure a farmer's cart, which took us to Vendeuvre, where we dined, and about two we set forward again in a covered carriage, which conveyed us seven leagues further. We passed through Barsur-Aube, and at six we were put down at a village about three leagues from there.

<sup>1</sup> Nogent-sur-Seine in the department of the Aube.

<sup>2</sup> It will be noticed that the countess makes no mention of how she obtained the necessary funds to undertake this journey.

"When I arrived at this place I wrote letters to some of my husband's relations, with which I sent Marianne, who could not find many of the persons in whom I confided. She went to seek a friend of Madame de la Tour, sister of M. de la Motte, to whom she sent in my note. This lady immediately knew my writing, and ran to her wardrobe, and gave Marianne petticoats, shifts, handkerchiefs, with half a louis, which was all she had in her pocket, and greatly regretted that she had it not in her power to do more. She then accompanied her to M. de Suremont, M. de la Motte's uncle. This gentleman's wife, after having coldly received Mdle. Charton, which was this young lady's name, and Marianne, refused to come and see me. M. de Suremont sent Marianne to desire me to meet him half way. A place was appointed, and it was about midnight when we met. The night was extremely dark, and we sat down on the bank of a ditch. M. de Suremont appeared very glad to see me, but expressed his extreme regret that he could not accommodate me with more than four louis, telling a very lamentable story that his buildings had cost him so much money, and that he was very much in debt. 'But pray where are you going?' said he to me. 'I am going to London,' replied I, 'for the English newspapers have for a long time mentioned my husband's name; I dare say he is there.'"<sup>1</sup>

The countess makes no mention in her narrative of another of her Bar-sur-Aube friends coming to see her while she lay concealed in the stone quarries outside the town—the mother of young Beugnot, to whom, in her days of affluence, the countess had given the surplus of twenty louis for her poor pensioners. This noble-hearted lady came out at night to comfort the wretched wanderer whom she believed to be innocent, and gave her all the consolation which a pious mind could suggest in a case so deplorable, returned her the twenty louis with some addition of her own, and parted with her like a Christian sister.<sup>2</sup> Such was the singular hold which this extraordinary woman seems to have had on the human heart, which began when she was a barefooted beggar on the public highway, and continued even when she was a branded outcast.

"I did not," continues the countess, "consider it prudent to

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. pp. 219-230.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. p. 43.

return to the same inn which we had quitted at midnight, as I feared our being suspected, or taken for thieves, with which all the environs of Chaumont are greatly infested, I therefore chose to walk the remaining part of the night. The moon, which was at full, made it extremely pleasant. We proceeded nearly a mile and a half, but had not advanced far into the forest before we determined to return again towards the town. We knocked at the first carbaret we came to, but the people not only refused to open the door, but threatened to shoot us, taking us, without question, for thieves. Shivering with cold, we were necessitated to take up our lodging on the steps of their door till the next morning, and at this season the nights were extremely cold, and the country wore almost the appearance of winter. About six in the morning three peasants and a woman passed by, who had two large dogs with them. I related to them our situation, and we traversed the forest together as far as Columbey, where we parted. Having breakfasted, we took the post, which conveyed us seven leagues further. At six the next morning we recommenced our journey on foot. The day was terribly hot, and we suffered severely in climbing the mountain, which is extremely steep, and very high, without any shelter from the intense heat. Marianne, who was very much troubled with shortness of breath, and incapable of proceeding any farther, sat down and wept bitterly till, fortunately, a good old peasant, who was on horseback, offered to take her behind him, to which she would not consent; but, as his house was but a short distance, she agreed to take the good old man's arm, while I seated myself on the horse. Taking Marianne's bundle, I gave the reins to the horse, who brought me to the house before his master, where the old man's daughter, who was lately married, recognized the beast. I briefly related to her the circumstance which procured me the pleasure of seeing her, whereupon she despatched one of her sisters to the curate's house to fetch some fish, and some of the best wine from another neighbour. Marianne was also well received. We were afterwards presented to the husband; and this good family lodged us with kindness. Not only did they regale us with a good supper of pigeons, and excellent fish, and delicious wine, but they accommodated us with their own bed, where we slept soundly for six hours. After a good breakfast we departed at ten in their cart to



reach Joinville, these good people refusing to receive a single sou for their entertainment.

“The keeper of a caribaret where we had sought shelter from a violent storm consented to conduct us as far as Nancy; and the rain having subsided, we availed ourselves of this proposal of our host, and continued our journey till we came into the midst of the most dismal forest I ever saw. It seemed a place perfectly adapted for the black business of robbery or murder. Here another terrible storm came on, and we travelled in the midst of a heavy shower for almost two hours and a quarter. It was now near ten o'clock, and we were still in a hollow, one side of which bordered another forest reputed to be most dangerous, and along the skirts of which our road lay for a distance of some miles. I could not but feel alarmed, and what added to my fears was, that I had not the least knowledge of that road. Our conductor was also a very ill-looking fellow, and his conduct was such, that though I cannot say he had really any bad design, yet his behaviour was sufficiently equivocal to make me suspicious. After a dreary ride of a couple of hours I discovered a light: it is impossible to express how welcome that discovery was, as it dispelled those apprehensions which the darkness of the night had made more terrible. Our guide now composed himself a little, and told me he was going to bait his horse, after which we might pursue our journey. ‘Most certainly,’ replied I; but when we arrived at the inn, which was at about midnight, I determined to take some rest.

“We sat down to supper, and I told our guide that we did not choose to expose ourselves any more that night, as his horse seemed to be so much fatigued. This determination did not seem agreeable to him; he stormed and swore, but all to no purpose. ‘I am determined,’ said I resolutely, ‘not to proceed till six o'clock in the morning.’ We did, indeed, set out an hour sooner, but then there was no danger; though, when he put us down upon an eminence on the side of Nancy, I really thought he seemed to quit us with an air of regret at having failed of his prey. After having dined at Nancy, we took a voiture, which conducted us to Lunéville, where we stopped and slept at the Hôtel du Saint-Esprit, from whence the next morning I wrote to M. Aminot, my cousin, an officer in the gendarmes. I took the precaution not to sign my name to this

billet, in which I merely mentioned that a lady, one of his father's acquaintances, wished to communicate some news from his family. Upon the receipt of my billet he did not lose a moment, but followed Marianne, who introduced him to my chamber. He approached me : 'Really, madame,' said he, 'I have not the honour to recollect you.' 'Do you not know your unhappy cousin?' said I. I could utter no more ; my sensations checked my tongue. He also appeared greatly astonished. 'Is it possible, my dear cousin,' said he, 'that this can be you?' He then embraced me affectionately, but his joy at meeting me could only be equalled by his surprise. The evening before my arrival, he had received letters from Paris, one of which he showed me, which mentioned my surprising escape from the Salpêtrière, observing, that there were flying reports that the queen had facilitated my escape. My cousin and I spent two or three days together ; and as I communicated to him my desire to pass through Switzerland, though without explaining my motive, he gave me in writing the plan of my route, which was by Luxembourg. After this interval of rest, Marianne and I pursued our journey, at five in the morning, on foot. We went eleven leagues this day ; and the next, not being able to procure a coach, we were obliged to walk nine leagues further. After this fatigue I really was fearful that I should lose my companion, who was most violently attacked with asthma ; and for five days the physician and surgeon were doubtful of her recovery. As soon as Marianne was in a condition to support herself, we took a voiture for Metz, where we slept, and the next day departed for Thionville, about ten leagues from thence. The diligence put us down at the sign of the 'Three Kings,' kept by one Phillips."

This inn appears to have been a regular place of resort for the officers quartered in the town, and the countess pretended that, owing to certain consequential airs she indiscreetly gave herself, her incognito was more than suspected by these gentlemen, who importuned her with their visits and invitations to prolong her stay in the town, which of course only made her the more anxious to get away.

"We proceeded on our journey," resumes Madame de la Motte, "and slept at Etauche ; and the next day we departed in a tilted carriage. My intention was to go into Switzerland, and to remain

a short time at some frontier town, from whence I could write to M. de la Motte, conceiving this was the only chance of being secure, and that Providence, which had so long guided and supported me, now granted me my wish, and directed me to an hospitable mansion inhabited by the most worthy, the most charitable of beings."

Here they stopped to bait their horses, and were pressed by the hostess to stay. "'If, madam,' observed she, 'you have any fears of being upon French ground, instantly dismiss them ; nobody has any power over you here.' 'I have no fear,' replied I ; 'but I am in want of money, and wish to write to my family.' 'Very well,' replied this good creature, 'for that very reason I insist that you shall remain with me ; you can write from hence.' About two days after I wrote to M. de la Motte, under cover to Mr. McMahon, his friend in London, to which I received an answer in about ten days, to the effect that he would make inquiries for some proper person that he could trust, whom he would send to fetch us as soon as possible. Three weeks, however, passed away without any emissary from my husband. At this time my good hostess had no idea who I was : a report gained ground, and even reached the military society at Luxembourg, that there was a person at the house of Madame Schilss with a tall, stout girl, who perfectly answered the description of Madame de la Motte and the girl Marianne. I was every day visited by a great number of officers, both old and young, then residing in the village, who constantly prefaced their visits with expressions of condolence, observing how very dull it must be for me to be alone in a place so destitute of amusement. The Chevalier de Curel, of a family at Langres, appeared to be one of those most officious in circulating the report that I was the Countess de la Motte, which made me tremble for the consequences, and I conceived that, by associating my hostess in my confidence, she might find some means of silencing these reports. I therefore trusted her, leaving everything to her discretion. This good lady rendered me very essential service ; for when persons came to make inquiries of her, she amused them with different stories, and at the same time enjoyed the most profound secrecy on every one of them.

"These reports made me extremely unhappy, particularly as I



had not received any further news from London, though the letter which I had received led me to hope that I should shortly have another to apprise me of the day when somebody would come to fetch me. At length, about the 27th of July, in the afternoon, a lady and gentleman came to inquire for me. Madame Schilss, informed that I had been long in expectation of some persons from England, was very well pleased. She introduced them as persons she could trust, and my own confidence was increased when the lady presented me with a letter from M. de la Motte."

Accompanied by this lady, who proved to be Mrs. McMahon, Madame de la Motte travelled first of all to Brussels and from there to Ostend, whence, after a forty-two hours' passage, the pair arrived safe at Dover.

"At seven we took the route for London," continues Madame de la Motte, "where we arrived at seven the next morning, and at nine my eyes were greeted by the sight of M. de la Motte. It is not my intention," remarks the countess in her most sentimental vein, "to attempt to describe those mutual transports which glowed in either bosom at this interview. The situation, the circumstances of the parties, will raise corresponding emotions in the bosom of sensibility which will convey my idea more strongly than all the pomp of diction that may captivate the ear, but not impress the soul."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. p. 230, *et seq.*

## XXXIX.

AUG. 1787—APRIL, 1789.

IN LONDON.—THE COUNTESS GIVES UP FORGERY AND  
TAKES TO CALUMNY.

“I REMAINED a fortnight,” continues Madame de la Motte, “at the house of Mrs. McMahon, in the Haymarket, without venturing abroad to take the air, fearing lest I should be discovered. Every coffee-house in the neighbourhood of this place was filled with persons, many of whom were foreigners, eager to gratify their curiosity by seeing me. To prevent the inconvenience of being stared and pointed at, my friend, Mrs. McMahon, contrived to take me out about nine or ten o’clock in the evening.”

The countess tells us that she found her husband in great distress, waiting impatiently the moment when his unfeeling uncle and aunt, Monsieur and Madame de Suremont, would send over such property of his as remained in their hands. The count had not long to wait, it appears, for the De Suremonts arrived in London a few days after Madame de la Motte, when they delivered to him a “ring, which had formed the stud of the Necklace; a watch-chain which,” says the count, “I sold for fifty pounds sterling; and a box I had taken in exchange, and which I sold to Gray for sixty pounds. Restoring these three articles, they told me that they were all they had been able to preserve of our jewels. Having had full leisure to invent these falsities, and persuaded that I could not have been informed of their conduct and the depredations they had committed on my property, they spared no pains to convince me of the truth of what they said, which would indeed have appeared reasonable had my intelligence not been so well founded.

“Affecting to be satisfied with what they had delivered to me, I, the same day, procured a writ to be issued, hoping thereby to frighten them into a surrender of the remaining jewels; but they imagining, from the inquiries they had made, and the advice they

had received, that I could not by any means molest them, pretended to show the utmost indignation at my conduct, and finally declared that they had nothing left belonging to me; that they had sold every article; and that, could they have foreseen the ingratitude I now evinced towards them, they would have given up all my jewels to the government.

“Judging from their resolute tone that something more than words was requisite to bring them to a sense of justice, I insisted no farther, but, urged by necessity, put the writ into the hands of a sheriff’s officer, who soon after, though much to my regret, arrested my uncle, a man of property, childless, enjoying the first offices in the place of his residence, and possessing the esteem of all its inhabitants, and whom I really respected. The case was otherwise with his beloved consort, a despicable woman, detested by all who knew her, who, I am certain, had prevailed upon her husband to be guilty of such a piece of meanness and injustice. The moment she saw him arrested she came to me, urging my acceptance of bills to the amount of my claims, still assuring me she had nothing of mine, and that she was going to part with some of her own property to purchase her husband’s release. Finding she could not make me accede to the terms she proposed, she ended by acknowledging everything, and departed to fetch what she had asserted upon oath had been surrendered to government.

“On her return she gave up two rings that had belonged to the Necklace, a pair of drop earrings (out of which she had taken four diamonds, which I only perceived after we parted), a hoop ring, a neck-button, a hair-ring, set round with stones, and another ring of small value. The day after this forced restitution my relations returned to their own home, where they have shared the remainder of the spoil; I have not heard of them since, excepting being informed, in a circumstantial manner, of all the havoc they have made in my house at Bar-sur-Aube, and of the contempt they have drawn upon themselves by their behaviour to me.<sup>1</sup>

The count informs us that he sold the articles which he so fortunately recovered to Gray the jeweller, who, spite of the part he took in the Necklace trial, was still ready enough to buy any more

<sup>1</sup> “*Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte*,” p. 210.



diamonds that the De la Mottes had to sell. The amount which the count received for these trinkets—all that remained to them of the famous Necklace—was two thousand two hundred pounds, a mere per-centage on the sixty thousand pounds at which the matchless jewel was originally valued, but still a nice enough little sum of money for people in a “hard-up” condition. True, it would not go very far in supporting even an approach to that state to which the De la Mottes had accustomed themselves, and which the hard fare and dismal cells of the Salpêtrière had not entirely destroyed madame’s taste for. Unfortunately “some people having learned that the count’s relations had brought him nearly sixty thousand livres’ worth of diamonds, eager to share the spoil, swore false debts against him. I myself,” says madame, “saw him arrested five times for different sums. M. de la Motte’s attorney availed himself of this, and advised him, to use his own expression, to rid himself at once of these troublesome scoundrels by giving a gratuity of two hundred louis to one and one hundred and fifty louis to another, while eighty louis were given to an attorney who had never once appealed to the laws in favour of his unfortunate client, from whom he had frequently received different sums to extricate him from real or fictitious embarrassments.”

Such being the state of affairs means have to be found to replenish the almost empty exchequer. The count has recourse, no doubt, to the gaming-table, for all his life he has been an inveterate gambler. The countess, on whom her sentence has had this wholesome effect, it had cured her of her propensity for forgery and theft, bethinks herself that calumny, if the envenomed shaft be only skilfully aimed, might yield a golden prize. This contemplated slandering of the queen “was an arrow I still preserved,” says Madame de la Motte, “as the best in my quiver, resolving to threaten, but not to shoot till reduced to the very last extremity.”<sup>1</sup> In pursuance of this resolution, rumours are wafted abroad—care being especially taken that they shall cross the Channel and penetrate to the royal apartments at Versailles—to the effect that the Countess de la Motte is engaged in writing her “Mémoires,”—the very titles of the chapters of which she had managed to get pub-

<sup>1</sup> “Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself,” vol. ii. p. 26.

lished in the English newspapers,—wherein she intends to give “an exact detail of the extraordinary events which contributed to raise her to the dignity of confidant and favourite of the Queen of France, with some further particulars relative to the mysterious transaction of the Diamond Necklace.”<sup>1</sup>

If Count de la Motte is to be believed, the Duchess de Polignac made at this period a second visit to England, again “to drink the Bath waters.” Our opinion, however, is that, either by accident or design, he has put forward the date of the visit (which it is quite certain the duchess made early in May, returning to France at the end of June)<sup>2</sup> for upwards of a month; for Madame de la Motte, according to her own statement, did not arrive in England until the early part of August. Either the case is as we have suggested, or else the countess arrived in England more than a month earlier than she represents herself to have done. Supposing this to be the fact, the visit of the duchess now alluded to would be the same visit of which we have already spoken.<sup>3</sup> The count in his autobiography states that, soon after his wife arrived in London, hereceived a message from the Duchess of Devonshire (the beautiful Georgiana), begging him to call upon her at Devonshire House. The count goes there, and on being introduced into the drawing-room is presented to the Duchess de Polignac and her sister the Countess Diane, who observe to him that, having come over to drink the Bath waters, and having heard that Madame de la Motte proposed publishing some memoirs, they thought they might perhaps be of service to her—in other words, might save her from fresh persecutions, and insure her the means of an honourable existence for the future.

On the count communicating all this to his wife, she immediately resolved, he says, to leave London with the least possible delay, for she feels certain that the intention is to kidnap her and take her back to the Salpêtrière, and threatens she will throw herself into the Thames if her husband will not leave London with her that very day. The count, knowing that she was quite capable of

<sup>1</sup> “Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself” (see title-page).

<sup>2</sup> “Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette,” etc., vol. ii. p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> See *ante*, p. 303.

carrying out her threat, wrote to the Duchess of Devonshire, explaining his wife's fears, and informing the duchess of her resolution. De la Motte, in answer to the Abbé Georgel's assertion that Madame de Polignac bought the MS. of the "Mémoires," affirms that at this time not a line of them was written, and never would have been written, had it not been for M. de Calonne (madame's old friend and ex-controller-general), who called a few days afterwards and suggested that the "Mémoires" should be at once written, so as to profit by the offer of the queen. With this view he introduced to them a M. de la Tour, a writer in the *Courrier de l'Europe* to throw their rough notes into shape; and in consequence the countess at once set to work, and produced her celebrated "Mémoires Justificatifs." Supposing this statement to be true, the chances are, that the Duchess de Polignac, in the settlement she made with the De la Mottes, provided for these memoirs never seeing the light. In one of those letters of court gossip, from which we have made frequent quotations, it is explicitly stated that Madame de Polignac was assured that "these writings would not appear." The queen, who was no doubt gratified at the success which she believed had attended the Duchess's negotiations, had all the apartments of the latter newly furnished at her own expense just before the duchess's return from her mission, and went, accompanied by the king, to sup with her on the evening of her arrival.<sup>1</sup> One can plainly see that the spirit which pervades this book of Madame de la Motte's was prompted by an axiom of which she is herself the author, and which is to be found in the second volume of her "Life." "*No calumny*, says she, "*is so certain to be believed as that which one woman propagates against another.*"<sup>2</sup> In the midst of the long string of infamous slanders in these so-called Justificatory Memoirs, with which the writer has sullied for all time the name of a noble-hearted, if somewhat erring woman, there occurs this passage: "If the Queen of France were not what she is, should I have been to her what a defenceless bird is in the hands of a froward child, who, after being amused with it for a few moments, strips it of its feathers one by

<sup>1</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. ii. pp. 157, 166.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. p. 412.



one, and then throws it into the destructive talons of a devouring animal?" Most people, after reading these "Mémoires Justificatifs," will be inclined to reverse the application of the above simile, and will look upon poor Marie-Antoinette as the defenceless bird, and seek for the devouring animal, with its destructive talons, in Jeanne de St. Remi de Valois.

When the MS. of these "Mémoires" was completed, it was sent to M. de Calonne, who, according to the count, altered it to suit his own purposes. Madame says that the ex-minister even added indecent expressions against the queen—his aim being to get recalled to France and to secure the restoration of the blue ribbon of which he had been deprived. With this object in view, armed with the De la Motte libel, the ex-minister writes to Versailles, offering terms. The queen, however, rejects his proposal with disdain. Calonne now desires to have the MS. printed without delay, and for this purpose orders type and presses to be sent to the house where the De la Mottes reside, so that the work may be done in all secrecy.

During its progress, the ex-controller-general seems to have carried on an intrigue of another kind with the countess, and one which was, moreover, so notorious as to be openly referred to in the scandalous publications of the time.<sup>1</sup> He used to twit her about the branding she had received, and on one occasion, when the countess was boasting in a large assembly of the capital hand she held at picquet, he spitefully observed she had better be careful, or she would certainly be *marked*.<sup>2</sup> Some little misunderstanding which occurred between the pair made them thenceforth at daggers-drawn with each other.

Just about this time, a new ambassador from the French court arrives in England—the Marquis de la Luzerne, brother of the Bishop of Langres, the countess's early patron, and reputed lover. He has heard of Calonne's proceedings, and loses no time in sending an envoy to the De la Mottes, to point out to them that Calonne will be certain to play them false, and to make arrangements for an interview. Calonne gets scent of what is going on,

<sup>1</sup> See "Julie Philosophe, ou le Bon Patriote," vol. ii. p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. ii. p. 237.

and tries to carry off the MS., but does not succeed. The interview with the ambassador takes place; Count de la Motte shows M. de Luzerne the MS., with Calonne's corrections and interlineations, and it is arranged that the ambassador shall make a definitive proposition so soon as he has received instructions from Paris. Calonne hears of this interview, goes to the De la Mottes, and demands the restitution of the MS.; threatening all the terrors of the law if they do not comply. The count remains firm, and madame, by the aid of an English naval officer, who subsequently translated her "*Mémoires*" into English, shows up the ex-French minister of finance in a pamphlet, which she styles, "*A Scourge for Calonne*," and which goes off like wildfire, copies fetching as much as six louis each in Paris on its first appearance.<sup>1</sup> The Marquis de la Luzerne, having received his instructions, communicates them to the count. He is commissioned to make an offer of ten thousand livres a year, with fifty thousand livres down, to enable the De la Mottes to discharge their more pressing debts. The countess, according to her husband's account, is opposed to accepting this very liberal offer, talks very big about her position before the world, clearing her character, &c.; the count, however, thinking that the solid pudding is to be preferred to all this, over-persuades his wife, and they give their acquiescence. The money is to be speedily forthcoming; but, unfortunately, one of those proverbial slips between the cup and the lip now chances. Cardinal-Archbishop Loménie de Brienne is dismissed from his office of prime minister, and M. Necker is summoned to occupy his place, and M. Necker will have nothing whatever to do with a De la Motte negotiation in any shape or form. Such is the count's version of this affair of the "*Mémoires*," but, like everything else from the De la Motte mint, it must be received with suspicion.<sup>2</sup>

When or how the MS. of these "*Mémoires*," of Madame de la Motte's was sold to the French court, we have no means of ascertaining; but that it was sold, and that after the sale the "*Mémoires*" were published in breach of good faith, is a moral certainty. In all probability the Duchess de Polignac negotiated

<sup>1</sup> "*Journals and Correspondence of Lord Auckland*," vol. i. p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> "*Mémoires Inédits du Comte de la Motte*," par L. Lacour.

the purchase, which was likely enough carried out through the medium of the French ambassador, the statement about M. Necker being a falsehood concocted to conceal the fact of any sale of the MS. taking place. Madame Campan asserts, in the most solemn manner, that she herself had seen, "in the queen's hands, a manuscript of the infamous memoirs of the woman Lamotte, which had been brought to her from London, and which were corrected by the very hand of M. de Calonne in all those places where a total ignorance of the usages of the court had made this wretch commit the most palpable errors."<sup>1</sup>

In the doubtful Lamballe Memoirs this Princess is represented as giving a most circumstantial account of her having become the purchaser of a printed copy of Madame de la Motte's "*Mémoires Justificatifs*" corrected by the hand of M. de Calonne, and of the existence of which she was first made acquainted by a letter addressed to her by Sheridan. This occurred immediately subsequent to a visit paid by her to England where she went on two occasions—once during July 1787,<sup>2</sup> and a second time in June 1791.<sup>3</sup> On the receipt of the work in question she delivered it, she says, to the queen, who at once brought it beneath the notice of Louis XVI. in proof of Calonne's villainy. Had the princess's narrative stopped here we might have felt disposed to put faith in it, but, unfortunately for its claims to be regarded as authentic, it goes on to say that the king forthwith indignantly ordered Calonne to resign his portfolio, and that the minister begged permission to return it to the king with his own hands. On this request being granted, the book was produced, and a scene ensued which ended in the king leaving the room, and Calonne falling upon his knees before Marie-Antoinette and imploring her to pardon him.<sup>4</sup> Now as Calonne was dismissed from office, and exiled from Paris in April 1787, three months before the Princess

<sup>1</sup> "*Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette*," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. pp. 107-8.

<sup>2</sup> "*Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI. Marie-Antoinette*," etc., vol. ii. p. 163.

<sup>3</sup> "*La Princesse de Lamballe : Sa Vie—Sa Mort*," p. 246.

<sup>4</sup> "*Mémoires relatifs à la Famille Royale de France*," vol. i. p. 315, *et seq.*



de Lamballe's first visit to England, and more than four years before her second, and was never called upon to serve the king afterwards, and as moreover Madame de la Motte's first libel, her "*Mémoires Justificatifs*," was not printed until 1789, it is quite certain that there is not a particle of truth in the above narrative, which induces us to believe that the so-called "*Mémoires relatifs à la Famille Royale de France*" claiming to be based on a private journal of the Princess de Lamballe's, are, like many other pretended Memoirs of the time, nothing more than a clumsy forgery.

Madame de la Motte herself indirectly admits that it was the desire of pecuniary gain rather than any particular anxiety to "clear her character before the world," which induced the publication of her "*Justificatory Memoir*." "My husband," says she, "standing on the very brink of ruin"—they had received since they had been in England two thousand two hundred pounds for their diamonds, and at least as much more we should suppose for the MS. of the "*Mémoires*," so that if this statement is true, they must have dissipated between four and five thousand pounds in the course of a couple of years—"was necessitated to have recourse to printing my '*justification*' as the only means of satisfying the craving demands of his creditors, whom he was obliged to avoid, as they made every effort to arrest him; while I, with misery like a vulture gnawing at my heart, and poverty chasing even at my very heels, detesting that burden of life which it is yet my duty to support, and, God forgive me! cursing the hour of my birth, remained defenceless—unable to protect myself from insult, or to ward off the blows which malice aimed at my reputation.

"M. de la Motte printed five thousand '*Mémoires*' in French and three thousand in English, confident, from the advice he had received, that the queen would not suffer them to be published, though I constantly represented to him the absurdity of this belief. . . . How could he hope the government would make terms with us, when they knew that the original MS. of the '*Mémoires*' was in the possession of M. de Calonne, who could make it public whenever he thought proper?<sup>1</sup> It never accorded with my senti-

<sup>1</sup> Husband and wife here contradict each other point blank. The count in his posthumous "*Mémoires*" maintains that the MS. was not surrendered

ments," continues the countess, "to enter into any pecuniary negotiations with the government ; the only thing I had at heart was the vindication of my honour ; and, had I been left to my own discretion, neither sceptres nor crowns should have purchased my silence."

This was a safe enough reservation, as neither sceptres nor crowns were likely to be offered even to a descendant of the house of Valois ; but we question whether madame could have withstood the temptation of a certain number of *billets* of the bank of France, had these been tendered to her, for times were hard with the De la Mottes, and it was necessary above all things to "put money in the purse." At any rate, she would have promised to keep silence, would have taken the money, and then have broken her word.

It must be remembered that all the time this bargaining is going forward for the sale and purchase of these wretched libels, Paris—nay, France itself—is in a state of ferment, what with the meeting of its states-general, the quarrels of its first and third orders, the braving of the royal authority, the dismissal of Necker ; with troops constantly under arms, riots out of which bloodshed arises in the streets, the tocsin sounding from all steeples, attacks upon the prisons, the states-general in permanent session, to be followed ere long by the storming and capture of the Bastille—in other words, a Revolution !

to Calonne ; the countess says it was—in all probability another falsehood, concocted by her, to induce the public to believe that the MS. had not been already sold to the French court.

## XL.

APRIL, 1787—MAY, 1792.

THE COUNT HAWKS THE LIBELS ABROAD.—IS IMPRISONED IN LA FORCE AND THE CONCIERGERIE.—THE LAST OF THE DE LA MOTTE LIBELS,

COUNT DE LA MOTTE, having circulated copies of his wife's "Mémoires Justificatifs" among the London booksellers and in other directions, and being, as usual, involved in debt, thinks it prudent to make an excursion to Holland, where he believes some business in these libels may be done; for it is, reasons he, just as easy to smuggle copies of them into France over the Flemish frontier as across the British Channel, and we all know that Mynheer has never been particular as to the character of the wares he trades in. To Holland, therefore, the count goes in the month of April, 1789. In tracing his career from this date we have but few materials to guide us beyond his own posthumous "Mémoires,"<sup>1</sup> which abound in evident exaggerations, and no less evident falsehoods. The reader is therefore cautioned to accept the count's statements with the same reserve which we have already asked of him in respect to many of the assertions of the countess. Truth would seem to have held no place in the De la Motte system of morals.

Before the count had brought his negotiations respecting an edition of his wife's "Mémoires" to a close, news comes across the Low Countries of a rising of the people of Paris and the fall of the

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Inédits du Comte de la Motte-Valois," Paris, 1858. This work, edited by M. Louis Lacour, is stated by him to have been printed from a duplicate copy of the manuscript Mémoires written by M. de la Motte in 1825, at the instigation of the French minister of police. Everything referring to the Necklace affair had been abstracted from these manuscripts while they were in possession of the authorities. See *post*, p. 366



Bastille. The count forthwith borrows fifteen louis from one of his Dutch acquaintances, with whose daughter he has been flirting up to a point that her father speaks seriously to him of matrimony, and hurries off to Paris, where he arrives on the 18th of August. He at once addresses himself to Bailly, the newly-elected mayor, from whom he asks a safe-conduct until the judgment against him in the Necklace affair can be brought before the new tribunals. He next has an interview with Mirabeau, who, he says, had already heard of his arrival, and informed the Duke d'Orléans of it, telling the duke at the same time they might reckon upon the count joining them in the attack which they contemplated making upon the "Austrian she-wolf" (Marie-Antoinette). The count thereupon calls on the duke, who proposes to him that he shall present a petition at the bar of the National Assembly, and subsequently supplies him with funds through Mirabeau.

The count tells a mysterious story of some unknown individual calling upon him at this period, and making an appointment for him to be, between twelve and one o'clock at night, in the Avenue de Paris, at Versailles, near the iron railings of the château, where he would find Mirabeau, disguised in a long blue cloak and round hat. The count keeps the appointment, and meets with Mirabeau as described, and receives from him a form of petition, which he is to copy out by six o'clock in the morning, and then return the original draft. Mirabeau, he says, called at his hôtel at the time named, when he handed him the copy of the petition, and pretended that the draft was destroyed, pointing at the same time to some fragments of burnt paper in the grate, as proof of the fact. Out of this draft petition, in Mirabeau's handwriting, the count sees his way to make some money. Without loss of time he takes it to M. de Montmorin, minister for foreign affairs, informs him of the nature of the intrigue which is going on, and explains who are the prime movers in it. By this means he gains over the minister, who is, of course, all affability, and speaks to him of the offer made some time back by M. de la Luzerne, which offer, he says, he is quite prepared to carry out. From this moment the count is in clover; for he obtains bribes from both parties, each of whom he of course sells to the other. After a time, matters being considered ripe, Mirabeau urges him to come to the bar of the National

Assembly, and present his petition; but this the count is indisposed to do. He pretends, therefore, that he has consulted two advocates, both of whom advise him that the Assembly is not competent to deal with his case, and so manages to shuffle out of the affair, thereby however cutting himself adrift from the Orléans party.

Count de la Motte, it seems, has an old score to clear off with Father Loth for what he professes to regard as his contemptible betrayal of the countess in the Necklace affair. He ascertains that, as a reward for his treachery, the De Rohan family have got Loth appointed one of the brotherhood of the Knights of Malta, with comfortable quarters in the Temple. To the Temple, therefore, the count hies, armed with a stout club, with which he proposes knocking out poor Father Loth's brains. "I know not," says the count, "whether he was warned, or whether he recognised me wandering about the Temple, but the fact is he quitted the place abruptly, and I could never find out what became of him;" a lucky result for Father Loth, who thereby preserved his customary modicum of brains in an uncracked skull.

The famous march of women to Versailles took place at this period, and the Paris papers announced that Madame de la Motte led the column of Mœnades, who went to storm the château. This was a piece of pure invention, for the countess was still residing in England, where, according to the count, overtures were from time to time made to her by the agents of the Duke d'Orléans. M. de Montmorin, hearing of this, proposes furnishing an apartment for the countess, and providing her with funds to come to Paris, so that she may be beyond the duke's influence; but the countess, having a wholesome dread of the branding-iron, and fearing that a "C" (*calomniatrice*) might be added to the "V" (*voleuse*) which already graced her shoulders, and having, too, the terrors of the Salpêtrière before her eyes, prefers remaining where she is, spite of Orléanist agents and other ills by which she is beset, a resolution which, as we shall presently see, proved most unfortunate for her.

Some short time after the receipt of the countess's letter wherein she expresses the above determination, news reaches the count of a most frightful accident having befallen his wife, and almost immediately afterwards comes a long letter from herself, written on her bed of suffering, corroborative of the dismal intelligence. The

count—who is openly living with a notorious courtesan of the period, *la belle impure* Seymour, as she was styled<sup>1</sup>—takes the matter very coolly; writes, no doubt, a short sympathizing note in reply, but as for hastening to the bedside of his dying wife, to watch beside it even for a few hours, and speak to her those few kind words of comfort which might have helped to assuage her sufferings and lighten the gloom of her departing moments, this never enters into the man's thoughts. The summer days pass pleasantly enough with him; he can lounge in the Palais Royal gardens in the morning, and in the Palais Royal gambling saloons at night, and it is only from the hawkers in the streets that he gains intelligence of his wretched wife's death. Hearing the news shouted out on the boulevards, he buys one of the broadsides and turns into a neighbouring café to read it, takes it all for granted, and, so far as we can discover, troubles himself no further on the subject.

Deprived of his helpmate, the miserable woman on whose mendicancy, vices and crimes he had lived from the very day that he married her, the count has now to labour single-handed against the government, and after a time against society itself, for the means of subsistence. He obtains an audience of M. Duport du Tertre, minister of justice, whom he presses with reference to a rehearing of the process against him in the Necklace affair, and from whom he asks, and eventually obtains, a letter *d'ester à droit*, which confers the right of appearing before a court of law spite of the judgment of the Parliament of Paris, still hanging over him. Of course if the count can get the case reheard, and the judgment set aside, all the De la Motte property seized at Bar-sur-Aube would be restored to him. Duport du Tertre was by no means opposed to this course, for though a minister of the crown, he sympathised with that party who wished to bring Marie-Antoinette before the new tribunals with reference to her share—for they persisted in believing her to have had a share—in the Necklace transaction.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, by some skilful manœuvring of his own, the count is brought into communication with M. de Laporte, intendant of the civil list, keeper, in fact, of the king's privy purse, who, he says,

<sup>1</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette," etc., vol. ii. p. 481.

<sup>2</sup> "Histoire de Marie-Antoinette," par E. et J. de Goncourt, p. 293.



tells him that the king, having heard so good an account of his opinions, and conduct, and devotion to his person, has accorded him a certain credit on the civil list, and has commanded Laporte to say that justice shall certainly be done him in the Necklace affair. And as a sort of earnest of what the count is to expect in future, M. de Laporte at parting places in his hand a sealed packet, containing two thousand four hundred francs in assignats.

Time wears on, the troubles of the court increase, and the flight of the royal family from Paris is decided on. The count asserts that it was arranged for him to accompany an old friend of his, ex-mayor of Lyons, in a carriage, in which a large amount of specie was to have been stowed away, and that they were to have kept a short distance ahead of the royal party. For some reason not given, this arrangement, which we do not believe was ever made, is not carried out.

The count, with whom the revision of the Necklace process has become a fixed idea, persistently bores the minister of justice to order a rehearing before one of the new courts, and in November, 1791, by the king's direction, according to the count, a sort of council is held, at which M. Duport du Tertre presides, when it is decided that the count shall appeal to the third tribunal. The president of this is a certain M. de Plane—believed to be amenable to court influence,—who, the count tells us, fought by the side of his father at the battle of Minden, and promises to do all he can to assist the son of his old comrade.

No sooner is this decision arrived at than the count obtains one thousand crowns from Laporte, who asks him to call upon him at the Tuileries that evening. The count goes, and to his astonishment finds himself in the presence of the king. His first movement, he tells us, is to throw himself at his sovereign's feet. On his rising, the king informs him that, from what he has heard, and the good opinion which he has himself formed of him, he has decided to grant him all that he asks. He then inquires of the count whether he happens to have with him the original draft of the petition drawn up by Mirabeau. Of course, the count has brought his portfolio, and instantly produces the document in question. "*Le misérable !*" exclaims the king, "he deserved his fate ;" which observation of his majesty satisfies the count

Louis XVI. was not ignorant that Mirabeau had been poisoned. The son of the Chevalier of St. Louis, and former gendarme at Lunéville, having declared to his sovereign that he was ready to shed his last drop of blood for him, now makes his obeisance, and retires from the royal cabinet.

On January 4, 1792, Count de la Motte, having taken the precaution to go the day beforehand to La Force, and choose his cell just as a man might engage the most convenient vacant room at an hotel, proceeds to constitute himself a prisoner. His apartment being somewhat damp, he orders a large fire to be made, and retires to rest for the night, but is, by-and-by, aroused from his sleep by a sense of suffocation. Springing out of bed, he finds his cell on fire, and shouts loudly for assistance. After a time he is rescued, but not until his hair is singed half off his head, and his great-coat burnt, more or less, to tinder. Hébert's "Père Duchesne" came out the next day with an accusation against the "Austrian she-wolf," of having caused the prison to be set on fire to consume both M. de la Motte and the documents he was on the eve of producing implicating her in the Necklace affair. From La Force the count is transferred to the Conciergerie, and on the second day of his arrival there his old friend and former barber, Burlandeux—he to whom the De la Motte furniture was wont to be consigned to save it from being taken in execution<sup>1</sup>—pays him a visit in company with some seven or eight others, whom Burlandeux introduces as Manuel (afterwards procureur of the commune), Sergent (one of the "killers" at the ensuing September massacres), Panis (a friend of Danton's), Robespierre, Marat, Hébert, etc., all of them having come to compliment the count upon his courage and to offer their aid, while vilifying poor Marie-Antoinette in most offensive language. De la Motte then has his say, tells his visitors that he is a *voluntary* prisoner, and exclaims vehemently against the old Paris parliament for having "sacrificed an innocent woman, deprived of the means of defence, that they might save a debauched prelate." At the conclusion of the count's harangue, his new friends, seemingly very well satisfied with what he has said to them, take their leave.

The hearing of the appeal for the revision of the Necklace

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 45.

process at length comes on. De la Motte pretends that the public excitement is intense, the hall being packed from floor to ceiling with Jacobins—ragged men and slatternly women for the most part—in the midst of whom he recognizes Burlandeux. According to the count, the judgment which the third tribunal eventually pronounces, at the suggestion of the president, would have had the effect of restoring to him all his property seized by the crown, if at this moment the minister of justice had not given orders for all the documents relating to the process to be remitted to the *procureur du roi*, who afterwards brings the whole affair before the first tribunal. The following letter, written by the count to the king, puts the matter, however, in a somewhat different light :—

“Sire,—When I voluntarily constituted myself a prisoner I should, in accordance with the promise made to me by M. Duport (du Tertre), and after the precautions which he had taken, have obtained my liberty and the entire restitution of my property within the week. For four months have I been detained and persecuted by a cabal which, disregarding all prudential considerations, seeks to give an annoying *éclat* to this affair. M. de Plane, president and judge of the third tribunal, was appointed to examine me, which he did in the most indecent manner, his questions having no other object than to try and compromise the queen, and principally to find the means of confronting her with me in open court, as a necessary witness and deponent of facts set forth in this horrid process.

“M. A. DE LA MOTTE.

“From the Conciergerie of the Palace of Justice, May 5th, 1792.”<sup>1</sup>

At the time the foregoing letter was written, unless there is a mistake in the month—May instead of April—judgment had actually been pronounced by the third tribunal exactly one month previously, namely on the 5th of April, a circumstance, one would imagine, of which the person most concerned could hardly have been ignorant.<sup>2</sup>

The count's old friend Burlandeux pays him another visit at

<sup>1</sup> Autograph letter from Count de la Motte to Louis XVI., in the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches.

<sup>2</sup> See the judgment of the first tribunal, *post*, p. 356.



this particular juncture. "Dog of an aristocrat!" exclaims the enraged barber, thrusting his fist in the count's face, "Capet and the Austrian she-wolf will never help you to get out of this prison." After thus abruptly delivering himself, Burlandeux, to the count's great relief, quietly retires.

While the De la Motte appeal was going forward, one day a stranger asks to speak to the count. He proves to be a bookseller named Gueffier, who has received, he says, from his correspondent in London the whole of the French edition of the last "*Mémoires*" of Madame de la Motte,<sup>1</sup> which "*Mémoires*," the count avails himself of this opportunity of stating (believe him, who pleases), were written against his advice. The count says that he communicated the above information to M. de Laporte, who obtained the king's authority for him to treat with Gueffier for the purchase of the work. The fact, however, is that De la Motte wrote direct to the king upon the subject, as may be seen by the extract which we are enabled to give from his letter, which, curiously enough, bears the same date as his other letter to the king—namely, May 5th, 1792:

. . . "There has just been bought up by a bookseller of Paris, named Gueffier, 'the Life of Madame de la Motte, written by herself,' and printed in London. Before constituting myself a prisoner, I informed M. Duport (du Tertre) of the existence of this work, which is really by Madame de la Motte, and which she sold on certain conditions, in order to maintain herself, to a printer in London, who ought, after having received what he has advanced and his own charges, to deliver up the complete editions of the work in French and English. Your majesty has, without doubt, been informed of these facts by M. Duport, who some time since endeavoured to buy up the work, and prevent its being made public. It appears that these endeavours were without result, as the French copies have arrived at Rouen, and are to be published in a few days at the shop of this Gueffier. This is what the London printer, whom I saw two days ago, assured me.

"I have informed my counsel of these details, and they seem much alarmed for the public tranquillity, and that of your majesty

<sup>1</sup> "*Vie de Jeanne de St.-Remi de Valois, Comtesse de la Motte, écrite par elle-même.*"

and the queen, on account of the dangers of the publication of this work. They have imperatively counselled me to have it seized before it arrives in Paris, as the property of Madame de la Motte, and now belonging to me by the right of succession. But as the booksellers who have purchased it, and who advanced Madame de la Motte the money, claim what is due to them, I shall either be forced to abandon the seizure or to pay them their demand. I cannot myself make a sacrifice of twenty thousand francs. I therefore beg your majesty to put yourself to the necessary expense in order to frustrate the projects of these evil-disposed persons. My plan, if it meets with your majesty's approval, is to seize and seal up this work at Rouen, and to offer the holders of it the amount due to them from Madame de la Motte. The whole will then be sealed up and delivered by my counsel to M. de Laporte, who will dispose of it according to your majesty's orders."<sup>1</sup>

Negotiations are opened with Gueffier, who offers to surrender the whole of the copies on receiving a sum of twenty-five thousand francs. The count suggests eighteen thousand, which Gueffier eventually agrees to accept, whereupon M. de Laporte forwards the count twenty thousand francs, with an intimation that he need not trouble himself to return the balance.<sup>2</sup>

An attempt, of which the king and M. de Laporte evidently knew nothing, had, it seems, been previously made to sell the manuscript of this edition of the countess's life to Marie-Antoinette. But the queen, guided by past experience, saw clearly enough that, whether she bought the manuscript or not, the libel was equally certain to be published, and indeed it must have been printed off at the time the manuscript was offered to her. She therefore peremptorily refused to enter into any negotiation. "At the commencement of 1792," writes Madame Campan, "an estimable priest asked of me a private interview. He had heard of a new libel of Madame de la Motte's, and told me he had remarked that the people who came from London to get it printed in

<sup>1</sup> Extract from an autograph letter from Count de la Motte to Louis XVI., in the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoires Inédits du Comte de la Motte," pp. 237-9.

Paris<sup>1</sup> were actuated only by the desire of gain, and that they were ready to deliver up the manuscript for one thousand louis, if some friend of the queen could be found disposed to make this sacrifice to ensure her tranquillity.

“I communicated this proposition to the queen, who declined it, and commanded me to reply that, at the time when it was possible to punish the circulators of those libels she had considered them so atrocious and so improbable that she had disdained to take any steps for arresting their course, that if she now were imprudent enough to buy up one only, the active espionage of the Jacobins would not fail to discover it, and the libel so bought would not the less be printed, and would become much more dangerous when the public learnt the means she had adopted to keep it from their knowledge.”<sup>2</sup>

M. de Laporte had the edition of the countess's life, which had been purchased from Gueffier, conveyed to his hôtel; but after a time, growing alarmed at the daily increasing excesses of the population of Paris, and fearful that at some moment when he least expected it, an irruption might be made into his house, and these “Mémoires” carried off and distributed among the people, he gave an order for them to be burnt with all necessary precaution and secrecy. Unfortunately, the person who received this order confided the execution of it to one Riston, a dangerous intriguer, and former advocate of Nancy, escaped, a year previously, from the gallows, by favour of the new tribunals, although he had been proved guilty of fabricating impressions of the great seal, and forging decrees of the council in proceedings undertaken at the request of the king's household. “I had,” says Bertrand de Moleville, minister of marine, “to read over to the witnesses their depositions, and to confront them with the accused, at the peril of being assassinated, not only by Riston, who, at one of the sittings, threw himself upon me with a knife, but also by the brigands in his pay, with whom the hall of audience was filled, and who were enraged at finding their threatening outcries did not prevent me

<sup>1</sup> The work was really printed in London, and, with the exception of its supplement, before the death of the countess in August, 1792.

<sup>2</sup> “Mémoires of Marie-Antoinette,” by Madame Campan, vol. ii. p. 194, *et seq.*



from repressing the insults which the accused offered unceasingly to the witnesses who came to depose against him.

“This same Riston, who a year previously was in the toils of a capital accusation, instituted against him in the name and by order of the king, finding himself charged with a commission which interested his majesty, and the importance of which was apparent from the mystery attaching to it, troubled himself less about the best way of executing it than in making a parade of this mark of confidence. On May 30th, 1792, (at ten o’clock in the morning), he had the printed sheets conveyed in a cart, which he himself accompanied, to the porcelain manufactory at Sèvres, and caused a great fire to be made of them in the presence of all the workmen belonging to the establishment, who were expressly forbidden to approach near it. All this parade, and the suspicion to which it gave rise in these critical times, caused the matter to be publicly talked of and discussed; and the same evening it was brought before the Assembly, when Brissot, and others of the Jacobin party argued with as much effrontery as vehemence that these papers, burnt with so much secrecy, could have been nothing else but the registers and correspondence of the Austrian committee. M. de Laporte was called to the bar, and gave a most exact account of the facts. Riston was also summoned, and confirmed the account given by M. de Laporte. But these explanations, however satisfactory they ought to have been, did not appease the violent feeling which this affair had excited in the Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

Madame Campan tells an interesting anecdote in connection with this unfortunate casualty. “One day,” observes she, “M. d’Aubin came and said to me, ‘the National Assembly has been engaged with a denunciation made by the workmen of the manufactory of Sèvres, who brought to the president’s desk a pile of pamphlets, which they said was the life of Marie-Antoinette. The director of the manufactory was called to the bar, and declared that he had received orders to burn these printed works in the kilns used for baking the porcelain.’ Whilst,” says Madame Campan, “I was giving an account of this to the queen, the king coloured and hung his

<sup>1</sup> “*Mémoires Secrets pour servir à l’Histoire de la dernière année du règne de Louis XVI.*,” par A. F. Bertrand de Moleville, vol. ii. p. 218, *et seq.*

head over his plate. The queen said to him, 'Do you know anything of this, sir?' The king did not answer. Madame Elisabeth asked him to explain what it all meant. Still the same silence. I promptly retired. A few minutes afterwards the queen came to me, and told me it was the king who, out of regard for her, had caused the whole of the edition printed from the manuscript of which I had spoken to her, to be purchased, and that M. de Laporte had not thought of any more secret way of destroying the work than having it burnt at Sèvres, in the presence of two hundred workmen, one hundred and eighty of whom were certain to be Jacobins. She told me that she had concealed her grief from the king; that he was dismayed, and that she could say nothing when she found that his tenderness and goodwill towards her had been the cause of this accident."<sup>1</sup>

Such was the end of the last of the De la Motte libels, which were nevertheless reprinted in subsequent years, and even so recently as the year 1846, more than half a century after their first dissemination, so thorough is the vitality of calumny!

Marie-Antoinette, in reply to questions put to her at her trial, with reference to the papers burnt at Sèvres, said: "I believe it was a libel. I was not, however, consulted on the matter. I was told of it afterwards. Had I been consulted, I should have opposed the burning of any writing which was against me."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs of Marie-Antoinette," by Madame Campan, vol. ii. p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> "Procès de Marie-Antoinette," p. 117.

## XLI.

MAY, 1789—AUG, 1791.

## RETRIBUTION.—THE CRIMINAL AND HER ACCOMPLICES.

WE must now go back in our narrative to the point of time when Count de la Motte left England to traffic in his wife's "*Mémoires*" abroad, with what success we have already seen. Judging from the countess's dolorous account of their dealings with them in England, it is evident that trouble as well as profit resulted from these "*Mémoires Justificatifs*." Neither she nor her husband were satisfied with disposing of copies of them through the ordinary channels, but sought to force a trade among merchants, and even hatters. It seems that nine hundred copies of the French, and two hundred and fifty copies of the English edition of the "*Mémoires*," together with two hundred and eighty-three copies of the countess's "*Scourge for Calonne*"—published at the several prices of one guinea, half a guinea, and five shillings—were intrusted to a French hatter in New Bond Street, named Coup, who advanced the count, at various times, something like three hundred pounds upon them. "Without any previous demand," says Madame de la Motte, "Coup came one day (May 14, 1789), in the absence of my husband, at the head of half a dozen bailiffs, and lodged an execution at my house in Chester Place, where he for the first time told me he had sufficient authority, my husband never having even mentioned the circumstance to me.

"This was another disagreeable attack, and I saw my house and furniture sold on the 21st of May, without being able to procure any account from this man of the books he had sold, which would have been more than double his demand, as at that particular juncture the sale of these books must have been at once rapid and extensive. He even had the meanness to put an execution upon four or five hundred '*Mémoires*' which remained with him, and



which were sold for only six guineas, and were resold by the purchasers at half a crown and three shillings each.

"Of the five thousand 'Mémoires' which had been printed, Coup had received only nine hundred. I proceed to mention what became of the remaining ones. My credulous husband, profuse of confidence, notwithstanding he had been formerly deceived by a man pretending to be a capital merchant, trusted this man with a certain number of 'Mémoires,' French as well as English, which he was to dispose of as merchandise to his correspondents in different countries, from whom, in a short time, he would receive remittances.

"M. de la Motte, though formerly deceived, yet gave him his confidence, and delivered to him nine hundred and nine French 'Mémoires,' valued at a guinea each, three hundred and eighty-six English ditto, valued at half that sum, and a number of the 'Scourge for Calonne,' for all of which we never received one farthing. This man's wife, upon whom I took pity, remained in my house during the time of the execution, under the specious pretext of rendering me service. Alas! what service did she render me? Small miniature paintings of great value, and other valuable articles to the amount of forty or fifty guineas, she put into her pocket, and when I reclaimed these effects, she made me a most audacious and impertinent reply, to the effect that when M. de la Motte should pay them, they would then give an account. Against their injustice I have no remedy. They have no property, and I am heartily sick of having any business with attorneys, who have already had too much to do with my unfortunate husband.

"Mr. Ridgway, who was the publisher of all these 'Mémoires,' had, upon supposition, about four hundred. These he sold for about one hundred and eighty pounds, out of which there was eighty pounds for expenses. I have scarce received one hundred pounds, and I have remaining, out of eight thousand copies, eight hundred French, and three hundred English 'Mémoires,' for which I have received no money.

"Very soon after this execution was levied against me, my servant, Angelica (the same who was with the countess in the Salpêtrière, we suppose) got into bad company, and was advised to sue for her wages, to the amount of twenty guineas. She applied

to an attorney, who threatened me with arrest. Alas ! I that am nobly descended, that have been the favourite of a queen, that have basked in the sunshine of affluence and felt the smiles of distinction, am now nothing ; and were it not for the benevolence of some respectable characters, I might probably be reduced to the dire necessity of returning to my former mean situation, and of imploring charity of every passing stranger."

And this is what ten years of struggling, scheming, intriguing, and petitioning ; of lying, swindling, forgery, theft slander, and depravity—and all to be lady of the manor of Fontette—have brought this wretched woman to at last ! "Misery, like a vulture, gnawing her heart," she says, "and poverty chasing at her very heels ;" her household goods sold for debt incurred with respect to her malicious libels ; herself threatened with arrest by the very servant whose release she procured from the Salpêtrière, while her husband is flirting in Holland with some flaxen-haired young *frau*. Either to console herself in the midst of these accumulated troubles, or else—and which is by far the most likely reason—with the view of pecuniary gain, she now writes her "Life," in two volumes, octavo, taking care to reiterate therein all her previous malignant slanders against the French queen.

"Nothing," says she, almost prophetically, "could have induced me to undertake a task like this—to retrace a life which has already been too long, and which, if my ideas of it are as just as I could wish, is drawing fast to a close ; nothing," she continues, in her most high-flown style, "could have roused me from this lethargy of grief but the desire of rescuing my memory, when this fluttering pulse shall cease to beat, and the hand that now guides my pen be mouldered into dust, from the detractions of malice. Abused, insulted, and disgraced, the wounds of bleeding honour are too deep to be closed. Do they call for vengeance ? No ; there is a just and righteous Judge, before whose tribunal I shall again meet my enemies, where neither the strong arm of oppression nor the 'gilded' hand of offence will be sufficiently powerful to vanquish innocence."<sup>1</sup>

Such were the motives which inspired the countess to write her "Life." Curiously enough, the Duke d'Orléans chances to be in

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 221.

England at this precise period—he arrived in London during October, 1789, and did not return to France until the following July—and it is believed that he encourages madame, by liberal bribes, to prosecute her task, even if he does not have a hand himself in its production.<sup>1</sup> The count, too, is by this time in Paris, and in communication with the government, and there are the best of reasons for believing that the countess's main object in writing this work was to extort more money from a well-nigh bankrupt royal exchequer. Be this as it may, the work is completed towards the close of the year 1790, when the Count de la Motte is receiving bribes both from the French ministry and the Orléans party; but “its publication is delayed,” we are informed, “from overtures being made for its suppression by a person pretending to be charged with a commission for that purpose from the then highest powers in France. Some months were wasted in fruitless negotiation, till the unexpected flight and consequent embarrassments of the royal fugitives destroyed that flattering prospect and pleasing hope of the countess's being relieved from the difficulties in which the most vindictive persecutions had involved her. The speedy flight of the negotiator, who had impressed her with an idea that she would soon be placed beyond the reach of fortune by the immediate settlement of an annuity upon herself, and the liquidation of her husband's debts, on condition of giving up the manuscript and printed copies of her ‘Life,’ left her to struggle with these new-created difficulties which his flattering assurances had tended so greatly to increase.”<sup>2</sup>

The struggle was but a brief one, for a very few days afterwards a catastrophe occurred which speedily placed this wretched woman beyond the reach of worldly trouble. According to the count, certain agents of the Duke d'Orléans, finding themselves frustrated in their efforts to induce Madame de la Motte to quit England, conceived the idea of having her arrested, in the belief that, when they had her in their power, they could by promises, and the prospect of a brilliant revenge, prevail upon her to allow herself to be conducted

<sup>1</sup> “Carlyle's Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,” vol. iv. p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> “Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself,” Supplement, vol. ii. p. 58. The Princess de Lamballe was in England in June 1791, and not improbably set on foot the negotiations here referred to.



to Paris. "Among these infamous agents," says the count, "there was one who went before a justice of the peace and swore on the Scriptures that Madame de la Motte owed him a hundred guineas, when he was immediately furnished with the necessary order for her arrest. Armed with this document, the officers presented themselves at her house, and requested her to accompany them—she being ignorant all the while of even the name of the villain who had sworn to the debt. Even had the debt been real, no one had the right to arrest a married woman, and Madame de la Motte was sufficiently acquainted with the laws of the country to be aware of this circumstance. Still, it was necessary that she should furnish proofs of her marriage, which she could not do, as, when she quitted Paris, all her papers remained at the Bastille. These scoundrels, therefore, insisted upon carrying her off; whereupon she declared to them that, if they used violence, she would put herself under the protection of the passers-by, who would come to her rescue. She told them, however, that she was going to send for her lawyer, who would, if requisite, find the necessary bail, and she despatched her servant for that purpose, cautioning her beforehand, that if the lawyer was not at home, she was, on her return, to make her a certain sign, and to say that he was coming, so that she might settle within her own mind what course to pursue in this emergency. Angelica had no sooner left, than the countess, with the view of keeping her vile persecutors in a good humour, served them with some luncheon and a bottle of port wine. While they were seated at table she walked about the room, conversing with them, and looking out of the window to watch for the return of Angelica, who, seeing her mistress at the window, and not having found the lawyer at home, made her the sign agreed upon.

"Madame de la Motte, seizing a favourable moment, abruptly opened the door and double-locked the scoundrels inside the room. The window being open, one of them looked out to see whether she left the house. Her extreme anxiety, and the state of confusion she was in owing to this unjust aggression, were, no doubt, the reason of her not remarking the hackney-coaches stationed before the house, into one of which she might have got, and been driven in a few minutes into another county, when, in the event of her persecutors discovering her retreat, it would have been necessary for

them to have procured a new writ before they could have again arrested her. But instead of adopting this very obvious course, and not, perhaps, imagining the fellows would be on the watch to see what became of her, she took refuge in a neighbouring house, the people belonging to which were known to her.

“In the meanwhile these infamous tyrants, by dint of kicking at the door of the room, succeeded in getting themselves released. They immediately made for the house which they had seen the countess enter, and demanded of the owner that she should be surrendered up to them. The owner replied that he knew no such lady, and refused to allow them to make a search. They, however, insisted, declaring that if Madame de la Motte were not there, they would take upon themselves all the consequences of the trespass. Thereupon they proceeded to search the house. Not finding the object of their search on the ground or first floors, they ascended to the second story, the proprietor following them and renewing his protestations. At last they arrived at a room, the door of which being locked they demanded to have it opened. In vain they were told that it was let to a lodger who always took his key with him when he went out; not doubting but that Madame de la Motte was concealed here, they threatened to burst the door open if the key were not immediately forthcoming.

“The countess, who was really in this room, had persuaded herself that a plot had been got up to carry her back to France, and there imprison her again. She was consequently in a most bewildered state. Opening the window, which looked into a yard, she got out and suspended herself by her hands to an iron bar which served as a guard, determined to precipitate herself to the ground if these fellows should succeed in breaking in the door. Unfortunately it was of common deal, and a few kicks sufficed to start the panels. The instant the countess caught sight of the head of one of her pursuers she let go her hold and fell with violence upon the pavement. It was her misfortune not to have been killed on the spot: her thigh was broken in two places, her left arm was fractured, and one of her eyes was knocked out; in addition to which, her body was a mass of bruises. In this state she lived for several weeks, during which time I received from her a long letter giving me a detailed account of this tragical event.

"Thus died, at the age of thirty-four, a woman whose whole life was one long career of misery, but which might have ended happily had not the privilege of her birth, by over-exalting her imagination, developed beyond measure those sentiments of pride and ambition which conducted her to her fall."<sup>1</sup>

The editor of "The Life of Jeanne de St. Remy de Valois, heretofore Countess de la Motte, written by herself," furnished, in a supplement to that work, a few additional particulars of the melancholy termination of her career. He says, that "she received most of her injuries through falling against the trunk of a tree, and that, while the feelings of the surrounding spectators were agonized at the sight of the dreadful spectacle which her bleeding and mangled form presented, the sheriff's officer, with a disgraceful apathy, was only intent to maintain the legality of his caption, and refused to surrender the almost lifeless body until he had good bail for its security."<sup>2</sup>

Spite of the prominent place which the countess and her doings had recently occupied in the public mind of Europe, the English journals of the day notified the fact of her decease in such brief terms as the following :

"August 26, 1791.—Died at her lodgings, near Astley's Riding School, Lambeth, the noted Countess de la Motte, of 'Necklace' memory, who lately jumped out of a two pair of stairs window, to avoid the bailiffs."<sup>3</sup>

Of the last surviving representative of the royal house of Valois, Mademoiselle de Saint-Remi, the Countess's youngest sister, a few meagre particulars have been preserved. In Madame de la Motte's days of grandeur she was engaged to be married to a certain Paul François de Barras, nephew of the Count de Barras, and a particular friend of her brother's, the young Baron de Valois, and who was subsequently better known as commandant of the Convention forces against the Robespierre faction on the 9th Thermidor, as the friend and patron of young Bonaparte, and chief of the Directory.

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Inédits du Comte de la Motte," par L. Lacour, p. 190, *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. Supplement, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> "Gentleman's Magazine," vol. lxi. p. 783.



"My disaster," (her sentence in regard to the Necklace affair) naïvely observes the countess, "prevented the nuptials."<sup>1</sup> In July, 1786, we find the Abbess of Jarcy, to which convent Mademoiselle de Saint-Remi had again retired, writing to the Baron de Breteuil on her behalf, and thanking him for the assistance which he had accorded to "virtue in distress." A couple of months afterwards, when this assistance is required to be renewed, the baron is favoured with a second letter in the following terms :

"I consider my requests on behalf of Mademoiselle de Saint-Remi," writes the abbess, "founded as much on justice as on charity. The innumerable examples of the goodness of our monarchs in such cases authorizes my prayers. And although the example of a foreign sovereign ought not to influence the will of our august master, I do not see that it is wrong of me to dwell upon what the Emperor, brother of the best of queens, has just granted to the wife and children of Count de Székély, condemned to the pillory, the galleys, and other punishments. His goods were confiscated, and the sovereign gave them back to his wife and children. He did more : he preserved to them, even to the last survivor, the perquisites which the culprit enjoyed as first lieutenant of the Hungarian *gardes nobles*.

"Is the position of Mademoiselle de Valois less deserving of pity? Alas ! she deserves it much more. There remained some fortune to the Countess Székély, whereas our unfortunate is alone in the world. Lastly, she is of the blood of our kings—very respectable blood, M. le Baron, in the estimation of both you and I.

"Shall I tell you, M. le Baron—and why should I hide it any longer? Poison has twice failed to conduct the unhappy one to the tomb she longs for. Without the most prompt help—without the assistance of antidotes administered for twelve hours in succession, the unfortunate wretch would have expired in the most frightful torments : less frightful, however, than those which she is menaced with suffering without the alms which I claim for her, and which you cannot refuse—I do not hesitate to say it—to her extreme misfortunes."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 442. "Mémoires Inédits du Comte de la Motte," p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> Autograph letter from Madame de Bracque, Abbess of Jarcy, in the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches.

Exactly one year subsequently, namely, in September, 1787, we find a certain Abbé Phaph interesting himself very warmly in the young lady's affairs, and writing to the countess, who has only recently arrived in England, urging her to sign some document which he has prepared, the effect of which would be to give the sister a charge upon the De la Motte property at Bar-sur-Aube. This the countess very decidedly declines to do, and writes back requesting her sister to send her over "three gowns which she fetched away from the mantua-maker's"<sup>1</sup> just after her arrest, and which she has ever since detained!

Th next we hear of Mademoiselle de Saint-Remi is that she is living openly with the aforesaid abbé as his mistress.<sup>2</sup> In April, 1787, we find her engaged in a process against the domain for the restitution of the family papers and deeds of succession, which she stated were under the seals affixed to the effects of her sister; but orders having come from Versailles for all proceedings in the matter to be suspended, the suit had to be abandoned.<sup>3</sup> From this time we lose sight of Mademoiselle de Saint-Remi until January, 1794, the height of the Terror, when, caught up in the revolutionary vortex, she is sent to the Port Libre prison as a *suspect*. Here she is at first mistaken for her sister, until people call to mind that the countess has been dead some years.<sup>4</sup> Six months afterwards she is transferred to the Carmes, and in less than another month—namely, on the 22nd of August, three days before the arrest and execution of Robespierre—she has the good fortune to regain her liberty.<sup>5</sup> What subsequently became of her, and the precise date at which she died, are involved in obscurity. Beugnot speaks of her as having retired to some convent in Germany,<sup>6</sup> and a paragraph in Count de la Motte's "Mémoires" would lead us to suppose that her death took place about the year 1817.<sup>7</sup>

But little is known of the future careers of the countess's two

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. ii. p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> "Mémoire Historique," etc., par Rétaux de Villette, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI.," etc., vol. ii. p. 346.

<sup>4</sup> "Lettres et Documents Inédits de Louis XVI. et Marie-Antoinette," vol. i. p. 171.

<sup>5</sup> "Marie-Antoinette et le Procès du Collier," p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> "Mémoires du Comte Beugnot," vol. i. p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> See *post*, p. 363.

Accomplices, the forger Villette, and the counterfeit queen D'Oliva. Villette, on being banished from France, proceeded to gratify that longing which he pretended he had to visit Italy where he seems to have lived for some years, apparently not caring to profit by the opportunity which the Revolution afforded him to return once more to the land of his birth. He published at Venice, in the year 1790, as his contribution to the lying literature of the Diamond Necklace affair, a small octavo volume, of less than one hundred pages, under the title of "*Mémoire Historique des Intrigues de la Cour, et de se qui s'est passé entre la Reine, le Comte d'Artois, le Cardinal de Rohan, Madame de Polignac, Madame de la Motte, Cagliostro, etc.*"<sup>1</sup> In this work he informs us that he forged the queen's signature under the eyes of the cardinal—a prince who overawed him, and who had so many opportunities of benefiting him—and of Madame de la Motte, a woman whom he adored; a pension of six thousand livres a year being promised him for his compliance, one thousand crowns of which he received, the following day, on account. The words "*of France*," were added, he says, by the cardinal's express directions. Villette pretends that Cagliostro, the cardinal, and Madame de la Motte, were equally concerned in the plot; Cagliostro, whom at the trial he emphatically declared to be innocent of all share in the fraud, being the most guilty of all. The Necklace was obtained, he said, with the sole view of selling it, so that the trio might replenish their bankrupt exchequers, the cardinal having exhausted his resources in supplying Cagliostro with funds to carry on his experiments for the discovery of the philosopher's stone, which experiments they hoped might turn out successful by the time the Necklace had to be paid for. Villette pronounces all the "*Mémoires*" put forth at the time of the trial to be merely so many romances, fabricated for the sole purpose of concealing the truth. Of the countess's *liaisons* he speaks in the most open terms. "Abandoned," he says, "by her husband, a depraved libertine and gambler, she sought to captivate other men, and to render them slaves to her charms." What these charms were, Villette himself

<sup>1</sup> Though it bears the imprint of Venice on the title-page, this "*Mémoire*" was possibly a production of the unlicensed Paris press of the period.



shall tell. "Strong natural wit, a graceful figure, a white and transparent skin, and eyes bright and piercing." He says that he possessed the countess's entire confidence, and knew of all her intrigues, and particularly her *liaisons* with the cardinal; he then proceeds to say that she was seduced in the first instance by the Marquis de Boulainvilliers, and that she afterwards admitted the Bishop of Langres to her embraces, that the Marquis d'Autichamp was her next lover, that she had a *liaison* with the Count d'Artois even, and reckoned the Count de Dolomieu and M. de Coigny on the list of those she had ensnared. "I have described her," concludes Villette, "as she was—amiable, pretty, and over-complaisant; too good not to have been a trifle weak, too passionate not to have been somewhat of a libertine. This woman, whom I loved to adoration, and who had loaded me with benefits, I dared to betray."

The termination of the career of Rétaux de Villette would appear to have been even a more sorry one than that of the woman he so adored, if the statement is true that he died by the hands of the hangman, swung off on the leads of the Castle of Saint Angelo, at Rome.<sup>1</sup>

The Demoiselle d'Oliva married her old lover Beausire, the same who accompanied her to Brussels at the time of her flight. He was an offshoot of nobility, and, as we have already stated, was formerly attached to the household of the Count d'Artois. D'Oliva's married life was but brief, and anything but happy, for she died, it is reported, in 1789, in the greatest misery.<sup>2</sup> Next year her husband became commandant of the National guard of the Temple section, but finding his influence rapidly declining, he retired to Choisy, near Paris, and managed to get appointed procureur of the commune; finally he pursued the despicable calling of *mouton*, or informer, and drew up the lists of proscription in the Luxembourg prison, when it was choke-full of persons *suspects*. Against the majority of these there was not a shadow of evidence, but as

<sup>1</sup> So stated by Carlyle in the rhapsodical prophecy which he puts into the mouth of Cagliostro, and which he subsequently says all turned out "literally true." See vol. iv. pp. 57, 60, of his *Essays*.

<sup>2</sup> "Lettres et Documents Inédits de Louis XVI. et Marie-Antoinette," par M. Feuillet de Conches, vol. i. p. 165.

evidence must be forthcoming in some form or other, the poor wretches were accused of having plotted in prison. It was remarked that Beausire's old acquaintances who had had the ill-luck to win money of him at play were certain to be on his list of victims, and it was said that he spoke privately to the public accuser to have them guillotined.<sup>1</sup> "This Plot in the Prison," remarks Carlyle, "is now the stereotype formula of Tinville; against whomsoever he knows no crime, this is a ready-made crime. His judgment-bar has become unspeakable, a recognized mockery, known only as the wicket one passes through towards death. His indictments are drawn out in blank; you insert the names after. He has his *moutons*, detestable traitor jackals, who report and bear witness, that they themselves may be allowed to live—for a time."<sup>2</sup>

Beausire was at the head of these *moutons*, was, in fact, the chief spy of the detestable Boyenval, who gloated over the number of victims he was instrumental in bringing to the guillotine. He said of Beausire, that he made use of him, but that Fouquier Tinville did not like him, and that he could have him guillotined whenever he pleased.<sup>3</sup> And it pleased Boyenval at last to put this covert threat of his into execution, and "D'Oliva's husband was hurled in."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires sur les Prisons de Paris sous Robespierre," vol. ii. p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle's French Revolution, Leipzig, vol. iii. p. 341.

<sup>3</sup> "Mémoires sur les Prisons de Paris," etc., vol. ii. p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> "Carlyle's Critical and Miscellaneous Essays," vol. iv. p. 53.

## XLII.

1786-1793.

## DUPE AND VICTIM.

WHAT became of the Dupe—Cardinal Prince Bishop Louis-René-Edouard de Rohan? Finding the bleak air of the Auvergne mountains sorely trying to his constitution, broken as it was by excesses and long confinement in the Bastille, the cardinal asked and obtained permission of the king to choose another place of residence. Either he or the Baron de Breteuil fixed upon the Abbey of St. Benoît, on the Loire, near Orléans, but the lady superior of this establishment, alarmed at the prospect of the cardinal and his large retinue of servants coming there and eating them out of house and home, besides being very backward in his payments, protested that she was unable to afford the cardinal the necessary accommodation.<sup>1</sup> Eventually he was taken in at the Abbey of Marmontier, near Tours, where, we are told, he was ever lamenting the mad hopes in which he had permitted himself to indulge with regard to the queen, and the blind confidence he had reposed in Madame de la Motte.<sup>2</sup> Growing tired after a time of his new home, the cardinal made various efforts to obtain permission to return to his diocese, and even sent medical certificates to his old enemy, the Baron de Breteuil, setting forth that the air of his native Alsace was absolutely necessary to the restoration of his health. The king at last gave an unwilling consent, and for a time the cardinal lived in something like his old accustomed luxurious state at pleasant Saverne. On the approach of the Revolution he was nominated, by the influence of the popular party—who thought that his desire to be revenged upon the court would secure him to

<sup>1</sup> Autograph letters of the Abbess of St. Benoît to the Baron de Breteuil, in the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches.

<sup>2</sup> “Marie-Antoinette et le Procès du Collier,” par E. Campardon, p. 156, *note*.



their side—a deputy of the clergy of Alsace. Being still under sentence of exile he did not dare accept the nomination, and a certain Abbé Louis was elected in his place. The abbé dying, the cardinal was again chosen, and the National Assembly having cancelled his sentence of exile, after some delay he came to Paris and took his seat, amidst loud shouts of applause—much, however, against the wish of his illustrious relatives, who, one and all, hated the Revolution as a certain individual is said to hate holy water. For a time the cardinal, with the view of self-preservation, went with the revolutionary current, and even took the civic oath; but when his co-reformers began to meddle with the property of the clergy, decreeing the sale of their lands and superfluous edifices, he cut himself adrift from them, and retired once more to his loved Saverne, to dream, however, no more mad dreams of love and ambition while pacing up and down his once-favourite “Promenade de la Rose.”

Any mere wordy formula the cardinal was willing enough to swallow, but he could not tolerate sacrilegious hands being laid upon church property, and particularly church property that he was interested in. “Messieurs of the clergy,” said a wag of the time, “it is your turn to be shaved; if you wriggle too much you will be certain to get cut;” and cut the cardinal, and with him the unfortunate crown jewellers, certainly did get, for the latter’s security on the rich revenues of the Abbey of St. Waast, of which the nation had taken possession, was now only so much waste paper, and bankruptcy was the result. Shortly after the grand national oath-taking ceremony in the Champ de Mars, the cardinal was summoned by the Assembly to resume his functions as deputy within fifteen days, but instead of doing so, he wrote a letter, stating that as it was impossible for him to give his adhesion to the new civil constitution of the clergy, he placed his seat at the Assembly’s disposal. The cardinal was now looked upon as one “*suspect*,” and had ere long to retire to Ettenheim, a dependency of his Strasbourg bishopric, lying beyond the French frontier on the opposite bank of the Rhine. Here, in his capacity of prince of the German empire, he caused levies of troops to be made to swell the army under the command of his relative, the Prince de Condé, whom he aided in every possible way. These proceedings of his greatly exasperated

the revolutionary party ; he was constantly being denounced in the National Assembly, and on one occasion Victor de Broglie brought forward a proposition to indict him before the national high court ; but the Assembly, knowing the cardinal to be beyond its reach, sensibly enough refused to entertain the proposal, although it was renewed again and again. It contented itself, on first hearing of the cardinal's flight, with instructing the municipality of Strasbourg to seize and make an inventory of his effects, of which they were to retain custody until further orders.<sup>1</sup> "Deprived of his vast revenues," says the cardinal's biographer, "he lived a modest and frugal life, intent only on securing the happiness of his diocese, now reduced to a small patch of territory on the right bank of the Rhine."<sup>2</sup> This life of virtuous restraint which the old spendthrift and debauchee, stripped of his fat benefices, was compelled to lead in his declining years, was perhaps as severe a punishment as could have been meted out to him. He died on the 16th of February, 1803, having attained an age only a little more than a year short of the allotted three score years and ten.

The cardinal and his "familiar" do not appear to have met again on this side of the grave. Cagliostro, as we have seen, had to make a rapid retreat to England, and here he remained for about a couple of years. Then he went to Switzerland, to Savoy, and finally to several of the chief cities of Italy. On December 27th, 1789, when the proceedings of the revolutionary party in France were exciting the utmost alarm in the minds of members of the sacred college, Cagliostro had the ill-luck to get arrested, denounced, it is said, by his wife as chief of a society of Illuminati. He was confined in the Castle of St. Angelo, and after fifteen months detention, was found guilty of practising freemasonry, and sentenced to death, which sentence was commuted to perpetual imprisonment in the Castle of St. Leo, where he is believed to have died in 1795. His wife was condemned to a life of religious seclusion in the Convent of Ste. Apolline.<sup>3</sup>

And what became of the Victim?—the Austrian she-wolf!—the Austrian tigress!—the Iscariot of France! Messalina, Brunehaut,

<sup>1</sup> "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI.," etc., vol. ii. p. 463.

<sup>2</sup> Biographie Universelle ; art. de Rohan.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., art. Cagliostro.

Frédégonde, and Médicis! as she was indifferently called by her relentless persecutors? A more powerful pen than our own shall record her cruel fate :—

“On Monday, the 14th of October, 1793, a cause is pending in the Palais de Justice, in the new Revolutionary Court, such as these old stone walls never witnessed—the trial of Marie-Antoinette. The once brightest of queens, now tarnished, defaced, forsaken, stands here before Fouquier Tinville’s judgment-bar, answering for her life. The indictment was delivered her last night.<sup>1</sup> To such changes of human fortune what words are adequate? Silence alone is adequate.

“There are few printed things one meets with of such tragic, almost ghastly, significance as those bald pages of the *Bulletin du Tribunal Révolutionnaire*, which bear title ‘Trial of the Widow Capet.’ . . . The very witnesses summoned are like ghosts: exculpatory, inculpatory, they themselves are all hovering over death and doom; they are known, in our imaginations, as the prey of the guillotine. Tall, *ci-devant* Count d’Estaing, anxious to show himself patriot, cannot escape; nor Bailly, who, when asked if he knows the accused, answers, with a reverent inclination towards her, ‘Ah, yes! I know madame.’ Ex-patriots are here sharply dealt with, as Procureur Manuel; ex-ministers shorn of their splendour. We have cold aristocratic impassivity, faithful to itself even in Tartarus; rabid stupidity of patriot corporals—patriot washerwomen—who have much to say of plots, treasons, August tenth, old insurrection of women,—for all now has become a crime in her who has *lost*.

“Marie-Antoinette, in this her utter abandonment and hour of extreme need, is not wanting to herself, the imperial woman. Her look, they say, as that hideous indictment was reading, continued calm; ‘she was sometimes observed moving her fingers as when one plays on the piano.’ You discern, not without interest, across that dim revolutionary bulletin itself, how she bears herself queen-like. Her answers are prompt, clear, often of laconic brevity; resolution, which has grown contemptuous without ceasing to be dignified, veils itself in calm words. ‘You persist, then, in denial?’ ‘My plan is not denial: it is the truth I have said, and I

<sup>1</sup> “Procès de la Reine” (Deux Amis), vol. xi. pp. 251, 381.



persist in that.' Scandalous Hébert has borne his testimony as to many things—as to one thing concerning Marie-Antoinette and her little son, wherewith human speech had better not further be soiled. She has answered Hébert; a juryman begs to observe that she has not answered as to *this*. 'I have not answered,' she exclaims with noble emotion, 'because nature refuses to answer such a charge brought against a mother. I appeal to all the mothers that are here.' Robespierre, when he heard of it, broke out into something almost like swearing at the brutish blockheadism of this Hébert,<sup>1</sup> on whose foul head his foul lie has recoiled. At four o'clock on Wednesday morning, after two days and two nights of interrogating, jury-charging, and other darkening of counsel, the result comes out: sentence of Death! 'Have you anything to say?' The Accused shook her head, without speech. Night's candles are burning out; and with her, too, time is finishing, and it will be Eternity and Day. This Hall of Tinville's is dark, ill-lighted, except where she stands. Silently she withdraws from it, to die.

"Two processions, or royal progresses, three-and-twenty years apart, have often struck us with a strange feeling of contrast. The first is of a beautiful arch-duchess and dauphiness, quitting her mother's city, at the age of Fifteen, towards hopes such as no other Daughter of Eve then had. 'On the morrow,' says Weber, an eye-witness, 'the Dauphiness left Vienna. The whole city crowded out, at first with a sorrow which was silent. She appeared: you saw her sunk back into her carriage, her face bathed in tears; hiding her eyes now with her handkerchief, now with her hands; several times putting out her head to see yet again this Palace of her Father's, whither she was to return no more. She motioned her regret, her gratitude to the good Nation which was crowding here to bid her farewell. Then arose not only tears, but piercing cries, on all sides. Men and women alike abandoned themselves to such expression of their sorrow. It was an audible sound of wail in the streets and avenues of Vienna. The last courier that followed her disappeared, and the crowd melted away.'"<sup>2</sup>

"The young imperial maiden of fifteen has now become a worn, discrowned widow of thirty-eight, gray before her time. This is

<sup>1</sup> "Villate, Causes Secrètes de la Révolution de Thermidor," p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> Weber's "Mémoires concernant Marie-Antoinette," vol. i. p. 6.

the last procession : ‘ Few minutes after the trial ended, the drums were beating to arms in all sections. At sunrise the armed force was on foot, cannons getting placed at the extremities of the bridges, in the squares, crossways, all along from the Palais de Justice to the Place de la Révolution. By ten o’clock numerous patrols were circulating in the streets ; thirty thousand foot and horse drawn up under arms. At eleven Marie-Antoinette was brought out. She had on an undress of *piqué blanc*. She was led to the place of execution in the same manner as an ordinary criminal, bound on a cart, accompanied by a constitutional priest in lay dress, escorted by numerous detachments of infantry and cavalry. These and the double row of troops all along her road she appeared to regard with indifference. On her countenance there was visible neither abashment nor pride. To the cries of *Vive la République* and *Down with Tyranny*, which attended her all the way, she seemed to pay no heed. She spoke little to her confessor. The tricolour streamers on the house-tops occupied her attention in the streets du Roule and Saint-Honoré ; she also noticed the inscriptions on the house fronts. On reaching the Place de la Révolution, her looks turned towards the *Jardin National*, whilom Tuileries ; her face at that moment gave signs of lively emotion. She mounted the scaffold with courage enough. At a quarter past twelve her head fell ; the executioner showed it to the people amid universal, long-continued cries of *Vive la République*.”<sup>1</sup>

And this was the fate reserved for her of whom Burke had said that he thought “ten thousand swords would have leapt from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult ;”—who, on her first entry into Paris, was welcomed by a wild sea of human beings, that surged along her line of route and filled the vast space of the Place du Carrousel ;—the fair young dauphiness, to whom, as she looked forth from the gallery of the Tuileries upon the swaying mass beneath, the old Duke de Brissac gallantly said, “Madame, you have under your eyes two hundred thousand lovers ;”—the young queen who, when called upon to share her husband’s throne, with mixed feelings of gratitude and pride wrote thus respecting her adopted country to her mother :

<sup>1</sup> “*Deux Amis*,” vol. xi. p. 301. Carlyle’s “*French Revolution*,” Leipzig, vol. iii. pp. 244-7.

"Though God caused me to be born in the rank I now occupy, I cannot but admire the order of His providence which has selected me, the last of your children, for the finest realm in Europe. I feel more than ever how much I owe to the tenderness of my august mother, who took so much pains and care to procure for me this great establishment."<sup>1</sup>

"Beautiful Highborn that wert so foully hurled low! . . . . Oh! is there a man's heart that thinks, without pity, of those long months and years of slow wasting ignominy: of thy Birth, soft-cradled in Imperial Schönbrunn, the winds of heaven not to visit thy face too roughly, thy foot to light on softness, thy eye on splendour; and then of thy Death, or hundred Deaths, to which the Guillotine and Fouquier Tinville's judgment-bar was but the merciful end? Look *there*, O man born of woman! The bloom of that fair face is wasted; the hair is grey with care; the brightness of those eyes is quenched, their lids hang drooping; the face is stony pale, as of one living in death. Mean weeds, which her own hand has mended, attire the Queen of the World. The death-hurdle, where thou sittest pale, motionless, which only curses environ, has to stop; a people, drunk with vengeance, will drink it again in full draught, looking at thee there! Far as the eye reaches, a multitudinous sea of maniac heads; the air deaf with their triumph-yell! The Living-dead must shudder with yet one other pang; her startled blood yet again suffuses with the hue of agony that pale face, which she hides with her hands. There is *no* heart to say, God pity thee! O think not of these; think of HIM whom thou worshippest, the Crucified,—who, also treading the wine-press *alone*, fronted sorrow still deeper; and triumphed over it, and made it holy; and built of it a 'Sanctuary of Sorrow,' for thee and all the wretched! Thy path of thorns is nigh ended. One long last look at the Tuileries, where thy step was once so light—where thy children shall not dwell. The head is on the block: the axe rushes—dumb lies the World. That wild-yelling World, and all its madness, is behind thee!

"Beautiful Highborn that wert so foully hurled low! . . . .

<sup>1</sup> "Maria-Theresia und Marie-Antoinette," von A. Ritter von Arneth, p. 107.



*Thy* fault in the French Revolution, was that thou wert the Symbol of the Sin and Misery of a thousand years ; that with Saint Bartholomews, and Jacqueries, with Gabelles, and Dragonades, and Parcs-aux-cerfs, the heart of mankind was filled full, and foamed over in all-involving madness. To no Napoleon, to no Cromwell wert thou wedded ; such sit not in the highest rank, of themselves ; are raised on high by the shaking and confounding of all the ranks ! As poor peasants, how happy, worthy had ye two been ! But by evil destiny ye were made a King and a Queen of ; and so both once more are become an astonishment and a by-word to all times."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle's "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays," vol. iv. pp. 30, 31.

## XLIII.

1792-1831.

"NESTOR DE LA MOTTE."—ILL GOTTEN GAIN NEVER PROSPERS.—  
GREEN OLD AGE.

COUNT DE LA MOTTE survived all the actors in the Necklace drama, and lived to see France once more in the throes of a Revolution and the Bourbons again dethroned—lived in fact, to the commencement of our own era, and heard of, if he did not see, steam-vessels daily crossing the Channel, and railways carrying passengers upwards of twenty miles an hour.

We left the count pursuing his second appeal with reference to the Necklace case. He had not long to wait for a decision, for we find that on July 27, 1792, the first tribunal gave judgment "on the appeal lodged by Marc-Nicolas la Motte from the judgment given against him on the 5th of April last by the third tribunal established at the Palais de Justice" in the following terms:—

"Whereas the complaint remitted by the procureur-général to the former Parliamént of Paris on September 7, 1785, is only signed at the end and not on each sheet, which is contrary to law, the present appeal is annulled, together with the judgment given by the former Parliament of Paris on December 5, 1785.

"Nevertheless, having regard to the gravity of the offence, it is ordered that the said La Motte shall remain in custody, and that the documents in the suit shall be hereunto annexed to serve as a record of the proceedings, and that the same shall be brought before the director of the jury to decide upon as he may be advised.<sup>1</sup>

The count pretends that in the first instance the judgment said nothing whatever about his remaining in custody, and that it was only on the Jacobin public accuser (?) rising and stating that as no notice had been taken during the proceedings of the letters patent issued by the king, he opposed the count's being set at

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur* for 1792, No. 220.

liberty, that the unpleasant addendum was made. According to the count, the king at once offered to withdraw the letters patent, but was overruled by the minister. In a few days it was too late; Louis XVI. was dethroned and a prisoner at the Temple, his own keeper of the seals, Duport du Tertre, sealing with the great seal the order for his arrest.

About this time poor M. de Laporte is also arrested and sent to join the count in the Conciergerie, and in a week or two, after a swift trial before the newly constituted tribunal of August 17th, the harmless old man is sent to the guillotine. Swiftly as the new tribunal does its work with the *suspects*, and swiftly as the newly invented guillotine seconds it, still it is not sharp enough for revolutionary patriotism, with Verdun fallen and the Duke of Brunswick in full march upon the capital. By Marat and Billaud, and Sergent and Panis and some few others, the hideous September massacres are planned, and De la Motte is horrified at learning that his name, with the fatal red cross against it, stands second on the list of proscribed prisoners in the Conciergerie. The count pretends that he and a party of fellow-prisoners secretly arm themselves and decide upon making a desperate resistance, though where they got their weapons from is by no means clear. According to his version, he is provided with a dagger and a couple of pistols, and takes up his post at the grating at the end of the corridor, where he remains on the watch, and from whence, not only did he see the prisoners tried, but slaughtered as well. Throughout the night nothing is heard but the unlocking of doors and drawing of bolts, followed by shouts, shrieks, and groans; and an hour or so before daybreak comes the sound of heavy footsteps, of loud voices demanding the keys, and sharp blows against the door at the entrance to the corridor leading to their cells. All at once the count hears his own name shouted out, and thinks the time has now come to battle for his life. A few more blows and the door gives way, and a band of strangers rushes in—friends, however, and not enemies, who caress the count, clasp him to their breasts, and carry him off triumphantly in their arms. The outside of the prison gained, they entertain him at a neighbouring café, and then summoning a vehicle, three of his liberators accompany him to the Rue de Choiseul, where they insist upon his going



and at once making his demand upon the "domain" for the entire value of his effects seized at Bar-sur-Aube in virtue of the sentence passed upon him by the Parliament of Paris.

The count of course does as he is bid, and what is most surprising, according to his own statement, without previous notice or proving his identity, or even the shadow of a legal claim, he succeeds in obtaining from the "domain" a sum of thirty thousand francs on account, twenty-seven thousand francs of which he stows away in his pocket-book, and the remaining three thousand, which are in assignats, he hands to his deliverers to dispose of as they may think proper.<sup>1</sup>

It was lucky for the count that he had been transferred to the Conciergerie, for at the time the foregoing scenes were being enacted in this prison, this is what was transpiring at La Force, where the count was originally confined. "At one o'clock in the morning of September 3rd," writes Maton de la Varenne,<sup>2</sup> "the gate leading to our quarter was again opened. Four men in uniform, each with a drawn sabre and blazing torch, mounted our corridor, preceded by a turnkey, and entered a room close to ours to search a box which we heard them break open. This done, they halted in the gallery and began questioning one Cuissa to know where La Motte was. La Motte, they said, under a pretext of finding a treasure which they were to share in, had swindled one of them out of three hundred livres, having asked him to dinner for that purpose. The wretched Cuissa, whom they had in their power, and who lost his life that night, answered trembling that he remembered the circumstance well, but did not know what had become of La Motte. Determined to find La Motte, and confront him with Cuissa, they ascended to other rooms and made further search there, but evidently without success, for I heard them say, "Let's look among the corpses then, for in God's name he must be found!"

The count had not long regained his liberty before he was discovered by his niece, daughter of Madame de la Tour, she who as a child had taken part in the famous incantation scene enacted by Cagliostro at the Palais-Cardinal, and of which the countess made

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Inédits du Comte de la Motte," pp. 254-282.

<sup>2</sup> "Les Crimes de Marat et des autres égorgeurs, ou, ma Résurrection," par P. A. L. Maton de la Varenne, pp. 67-8.

so much at the Necklace trial. The game of appealing and petitioning against the judgment rendered in the Necklace trial being now up, and it being the duty of all patriots to hurl back foreign invasion, Count de la Motte returns to his old profession of arms, raises a company of cavalry, composed chiefly of former friends in the gendarmerie, gets appointed captain, has his troop reviewed by the colonel on the Boulevards, and next day finds himself denounced by patriot Burlandeux, who charges him with being both royalist and aristocrat, and swears that the company he has joined is composed entirely of men of his own stamp, with not a single *sans-culotte* among them. The count not desiring to return to his old quarters in the Conciergerie—for again there with Danton as minister of justice, the chances are that he would only leave them for the guillotine—is glad enough to return his sword to its scabbard, and accept a passport for his native town of Bar-sur-Aube.

On his arrival there he finds the great pavilion attached to his house occupied by the provincial directory, which necessitates his furnishing a few rooms in the house itself for his own accommodation. Having done this, he proceeds to Tonnerre to fetch his sister and niece, who have taken up their residence there. At Tonnerre the count stays for several weeks, smitten with the charms, or possibly the expectations, of a young lady, only daughter of a rich proprietor. “I was thirty-six,” remarks he—he was upwards of thirty-eight—“but I did not look so old; she was eighteen.” The count finding himself favoured in his suit, asks the hand of mademoiselle in marriage, and is accepted.

Time passes pleasantly enough for the next month or two; the count is installed in the old house at Bar-sur-Aube, and has his sister and niece residing with him. The shooting season is on, and only give the count his dog and his gun and he will not lack for amusement. Of course he makes frequent journeys to Tonnerre, although something like fifty miles of cross roads intervene between the two places; but what are these to a man in love, who has been accustomed to the saddle too all his life? How he manages to live at this time he does not condescend to tell us. There are no more sealed money packages from poor old Laporte. Was it on the balance of the assignats which he received from the domain?—if he

ever did receive what he states—or was it upon his sister, Madame de la Tour? We think the latter the most probable. M. de la Tour had emigrated, and the count's anxiety that his sister should live with him arose, we expect, from his desire to live on her.

It is at this time, November, 1792, that the king is brought to trial; the count is nervously anxious for news of the result of the proceedings, simply because, as he admits, he still entertained some faint hopes of being able to obtain a further supply of cash from the dethroned monarch. Louis XVI. dead, the count is reduced to his shadowy claim on the domain.

During the next eighteen months, De la Motte leads the life of a country gentleman at Bar-sur-Aube. He hunts, and shoots, and fishes, and cultivates his little plot of land, and rides constantly over to Tonnerre. The queen is now brought to trial, and he is appealed to, he says, to come to Paris and depose against her, but declines to do so. "In my opinion," observes this contemptible hypocrite, professing to believe in his wife's pretended intimacy with Marie-Antoinette, "the queen was not so blamable (in the Necklace affair) as Madame de la Motte believed. In her position it was difficult to interfere between the law and its victim. I was persuaded this sacrifice had cost the queen much, and I had had proofs of the goodness of her heart."<sup>1</sup> In May, 1794, the count proceeds to Paris to urge his claim against the domain, which claim of his has now become as much his fixed idea as the revision of his sentence in the Necklace trial was a year or two ago. He met, however, with no success; and after two months spent in wearying appeals, returns home again, balked in all his plans, and thoroughly disgusted to find that Bar-sur-Aube has now its revolutionary committee, and its denouncers of *suspects*, and is by no means a secure place to reside in. Tonnerre, he thinks, will be more preferable, so to Tonnerre he hies, but only to find that it also has its denouncers. The count hastens home again, and finds his sister and niece already arrested as the wife and daughter of an *émigré*; thinking his turn will not be long in coming, he keeps his horse ready saddled in his stable, puts a pair of pistols in the holsters, and prepares to ride away at the first signal of danger.

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Inédits du Comte de la Motte," pp. 286-302.



With the view of keeping in with the revolutionary party, the count gives a supper to the members of the committee, after which proof of patriotism they grant him a certificate of citizenship in proper form. Protected by this, he returns to Tonnerre, and proceeds to take the necessary steps for his marriage. But the municipality will not permit the banns to be published until the count produces a certificate of the countess's death, and this, owing to the war with England, he is unable to procure. Back to Bar-sur-Aube the count rides again and obtains such certificate as he can from the authorities there—his uncle, M. de Suremont, the same that had to disgorge the jewels belonging to the count which he had appropriated—being mayor at the time. Ere, however, the count can return to Tonnerre he is arrested by order of a government commissioner, and carried off by a couple of *militaires* to Troyes, to the same prison where his sister and niece are already confined. Here the time seems to have passed pleasantly enough with music, singing, reading of plays and flirtations between the male and female prisoners. Among the latter is the “wife of an *émigré*, with a charming daughter of eighteen”—eighteen seems to have been an irresistible age with the count. “Not having,” says he, in the coolest manner, “any further relations with the people of Tonnerre”—although he was about setting out to his wedding at the very time he was arrested—“I decided upon marrying this young person.”

Fortunately for the count, Robespierre's fall takes place at this period, and he and his fellow-prisoners regain their liberty. On returning to Bar-sur-Aube he finds that all his arms and horses have been appropriated by the officers who arrested him, and that they and his servants have pretty well stripped his house between them. He at once institutes proceedings in the local courts, obtains a judgment by default, and the two *militaires* are cast in damages for fifty thousand francs, which damages the count of course hopes to get some day or other. At any rate, thenceforward these fifty thousands francs become his fixed idea, and we hear no more of his claim against the domain.

The count, being sadly in need of ready cash, sells his house—that house on which so large a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the famous Necklace had been squandered, to the postmaster

of Bar-sur-Aube. The commodious stables serve admirably for the post-master's stud of horses, the elegantly decorated *salons* and *chambres à coucher* furnish handsome reception and sleeping rooms for his guests. The great pavilion is reserved for the count's own use for the space of a year; and here he, his wife—for he has married the charming young lady of eighteen—and his mother-in-law, for a time reside. At the commencement of 1796 they remove to what the count describes as a charming hermitage, surrounded by woods and waterfalls and lovely views, and where they farm their own land, and live a life of country ease. Several years—happy ones after a fashion, one would suppose—thus glide by, until at length the count's mother-in-law, weary of the woods and the waterfalls and the charming views, urges him to go to Paris. Horses, bullocks, cows, pigs, poultry, and standing crops are forthwith sold, and to Paris the family betake themselves. Bonaparte is now first consul; the count obtains an audience of him, presents a petition, and is told by the great man that he remembers seeing him years ago at Brienne. Nothing, however, comes of the petition, and spite of all his efforts the count cannot find the two officers against whom he has the judgment for fifty thousand francs. For some years he seems to live in Paris agreeably enough—no doubt on the resources of his mother-in-law—spending his time between the Palais Royal and the Boulevards, and ever on the look-out for the two *militaires* who plundered his house at Bar-sur-Aube. At last, by a lucky chance, he tracks out one of them, has him arrested, and after various legal proceedings, is disgusted at seeing him set at liberty on the ground that the government had granted a general amnesty for all acts done in service of the state at this period of national trouble.

Year after year rolls by, and the count witnesses the establishment of the Empire, the fall of Napoleon, and his consignment to the Isle of Elba, and the return of the Bourbons to France, to bring about which latter event he took most energetic steps. Beugnot, whom the reader will remember as the young barrister of Bar-sur-Aube, and who has managed to keep his head upon his shoulders during the revolutionary whirl, finds himself appointed minister of police, having already had the title of count conferred upon him by Napoleon. De la Motte loses not a moment in appealing to his

former rival to serve an old friend and fellow-townsmen, and Beugnot, knowing perfectly well the count's tastes, and precisely what he is fitted for, gets the farmer of the gambling tables in the Palais Royal—the leases of which Beugnot, in his capacity of police minister, had to renew—to give him some congenial berth. The count pretends that it was simply a pension of two hundred francs a month which he received from Bernard, the lessee of the gambling saloons, and that he accepted this with great repugnance. It is far more probable that he had to do something for his paltry pittance—act, for example, as decoy duck, and entice all the game he could to fowler Bernard's net. Whichever it may have been, post or pension simply, the count lost it before a year was over, when Napoleon was again ruler of France.

At the second return of the Bourbons after the battle of Waterloo, Count Beugnot is named postmaster-general. De la Motte again seeks him out, and obtains a letter from him to Bernard, who reinstates him in his former position, and such as it was, the count manages to hold it for a couple of years or so, when he gets his dismissal. Of course he flies off to complain to Beugnot, but Beugnot can do nothing for him; he however promises to see if he can serve the count in some other way. Eventually he appoints the count's sister, Madame de la Tour, postmistress at Bar-sur-Aube, but to the count himself he gives no sort of place.

“At this epoch” (1817), writes the count, in dolorous strain, “I had just lost successively my sister-in-law (Mademoiselle de Saint-Remi), my wife, and my mother-in-law. My son, aged fifteen, had determined upon proceeding to Guadaloupe with the first battalion ordered to that colony. I was therefore alone in the world, without consolation, without help, without even the means of existence. Sent away from one hotel after another through default of payment, humiliated at being obliged to receive from my acquaintances the smallest pittance, that too frequently proved insufficient for my most pressing wants, I felt my courage forsake me, and all I thought of was putting an end to a life of so much misery.”<sup>1</sup>

Being without the means of procuring a pistol, the count informs us that he resolved on throwing himself into the Seine. Instead,

<sup>1</sup> “Mémoires Inédits du Comte de la Motte,” pp. 303-362.



however, of doing this from one of the quays, or from the banks of the river in the immediate suburbs, he makes a long country journey to Franconville-la-Garenne, several miles away from the Seine at its nearest point. This gives him opportunity for reflection, and he abandons his suicidal intentions and returns to Paris determined to present a petition to the king. It is curious to find the count in his old age returning to the old De la Motte de Valois practice of memorializing the crown. Times, however, had changed, and there were too many petitioners with real grievances pressing their claims upon the Bourbons for any of the De la Motte de Valois kith or kin to stand a shadow of a chance. As luck would have it, when the count reached Paris, after a tramp of at least twenty miles, he encountered a friend who gave him a good breakfast, and made him some fair promises which put him in spirits again. He now prepares his petition, and sends it to Marshal Beurnonville with a letter for the Duke de Chartres. In a few days the count receives a reply. The duke has forwarded his petition to his majesty, who has remitted it, accompanied by a recommendation of his own, to the minister of his household. The count rubs his hands at this good news, and anxiously waits for further intelligence. At last a friend undertakes to make inquiries for him at the ministerial bureau, and learns *Sacré Dieu !* that all petitions accompanied by special recommendations from the king are stowed away in pigeon-holes on their receipt, and are never seen or heard of more. The count hastens to the marshal in a frantic state of mind ; the marshal does what he can to pacify him, and, as a matter of course, exhorts him to be patient. Patient ! poor comfort this to a man reduced "to live upon horse-beans and boiled potatoes without seasoning, and rarely tasting even bread,"<sup>1</sup> and whose span of life is well-nigh drawn out to the allotted three score years and ten.

The count, in his depth of misery again resolves upon suicide, and again sets forth on a long journey before executing his purpose. When night sets in he is almost twenty miles from Paris. Selecting a favourable spot, the old man proceeds to put his design into execution. First of all he ties up his pocket-book, containing the letters of the duke and the marshal, in his handkerchief, to which

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Inédits du Comte de la Motte," p. 365.

he attaches a heavy stone or two, and then sinks it in the stream. He next flings in his hat and cane, and prepares to follow them, but his courage forsakes him. Even at well nigh three score and ten the love of life proves too strong. In the dark waters before him the count sees, he says, only waves of blood, and suddenly visions of the hideous night of September 2nd rise vividly before his eyes. Rushing from the river's brink he gains a meadow, where he lays himself down and sleeps. On awaking he walks for upwards of a couple of hours in the direction of Paris, and eventually finds himself on the road to Choisy. Seeing a light in one of the houses of the village he makes for it, and fortunately finds a man stirring, of whom he begs a draught of water, telling him that he has been attacked and robbed by thieves. The man, compassionating his miserable appearance, gives him a glass of wine instead, and a stout stick to help him forward on the road, and after a brief rest the count resumes his journey. He goes again to his old friend, the same who gave him the breakfast on his return from a similar expedition, tells him of his second adventure, and is again relieved by him.

After having allowed his process against the two *militaires* to slumber for some years, the count revives it again, and applies to a matrimonial agent to take it up, but it being quite out of this man's line of business, he, on the tanner's principle of there being nothing like leather, suggests matrimony to the count as the best way of surmounting his misfortunes—informing him that he has an old dowager on his books who is mad to marry one of the *ancien régime*. The count is nothing loth; so an interview is arranged, and an invitation to dinner follows; and the count, got up for the occasion, presents himself at the old lady's house, of which he already looks forward to being master. He is shocked, however, at the number of children and grandchildren he is introduced to, and still more shocked at the want of manners of the little brats, and especially at an episode which transpires at the dinner-table, and which delicacy will not permit us to describe. The dinner, which was of the noisiest, in due course comes to an end, and with it the count's brief courtship of the dowager who was mad to marry a man of the *ancien régime*.

For a year or two longer the old count drags on a miserable

existence. He succeeds in getting a lawyer to take up his case against the two officers, and obtains from him an advance of five hundred francs. Five hundred francs! why the old count must have been as delighted as he was in the old days when he came over from England with drafts on Perregaux for between two and three hundred times five hundred francs. This slice of luck puts him once more in clover for a time, but only for a time, for although the case prospers at the outset, it is finally decided against him, and starvation again stares him in the face. At this moment a dislocated limb forces the wretched old man to take refuge in the Hôpital de la Charité, and here he remains for many weary months. "It was while I was in this hospital," says the count, "that M. Panisset came to see me, and found me on my bed of suffering, and made me certain proposals on the part of M. de Lavan, prefect of police."<sup>1</sup>

When the count was sufficiently recovered to come abroad, his first visit was to M. de Lavan, at the prefecture. "In 1825," says M. Feuillet de Conches, "a man bowed down by age and misery presented himself at M. de Lavan's bureau, and was received by the chief of his cabinet, a person of rare merit and distinguished character, M. Duplessis. It was Count de la Motte, who came to ask bread. M. Duplessis conversed with him respecting the Necklace affair, and suggested that he should write his memoirs, including his reminiscences of this mysterious incident. La Motte thereupon wrote what was suggested, and with every appearance of good faith. His notes only confirmed the details which were already known. The queen's memory had no need of being cleared by a poor broken-down wretch who, after having helped to cast dirt upon her august fame by contributing to the atrocious calumnies of his wife, now came forward to deny them under the stroke of misery, in presence of a royalist government. Still it was no less precious to have an authentic denial written by one of the principal actors in this too famous drama, an old man, worn down by misfortune, but retaining all his intelligence, understanding the character of the atonement, and accepting it, according to the opinion of M. Duplessis, with resignation and good faith. Out of

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Inédits du Comte de la Motte," p. 375.



respect to memories, become almost saint-like ; out of respect, above all, to the daughter of Louis XVI., (to whom the resuscitation of the name of La Motte, upon which evil-disposed people would have been certain to comment, would have been the cause of considerable grief,) M. de Lavan thought it best to envelop in obscurity the few days this unfortunate being had still to live."<sup>1</sup>

"The pretensions of M. de la Motte," remarks M. Campardon, were exceedingly modest. All he asked was an annuity of from three hundred to four hundred francs for life, and his admission into the Hospice de Chaillot." During the last years of his existence, the count, who was commonly known by the nickname of "Valois-Collier,"<sup>2</sup> is said to have taken his daily stroll beneath the famous "Galleries de Bois" of the Palais Royal, which stood where the present handsome Galerie d'Orléans now stands, and from being a favourite resort of the Russian officers belonging to the army of occupation had come to be derisively styled the Tartars' Camp. To the very last, therefore, the Count affected the neighbourhood of his old haunts, the gambling saloons of the Palais Royal. Overwhelmed by infirmity and misery, he died in the month of November, 1831, having almost attained his eightieth year.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Lettres et Documents Inédits de Louis XVI. et Marie-Antoinette," vol. i. p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> "Journal de Paris," Nov. 12, 1831.

<sup>3</sup> "Marie-Antoinette et le Procès du Collier," par E. Campardon, p. 200.

## XLIV.

1786—1866.

THE CROWN JEWELLERS.—THE END OF THE NECKLACE CASE.—HISTORY  
AGAIN REPEATS ITSELF.

To render our narrative complete, it is necessary we should inform the reader how it fared with the crown jewellers—Böhmer and Bassenge, “Au Grand Balcon,” Rue Vendôme—and what was the final upshot of the famous Necklace case. In the first place the jewellers never received a single *sou* of the rich revenues of the abbey of Saint Waast—computed to produce 300,000 livres a year, and really yielding 225,000 livres, which had been assigned to them. Among their many creditors was M. Nicolas Deville, the king’s secretary, to whom they owed 900,602 livres, and to whom they re-assigned the aforesaid revenues for the liquidation of their debt; but unfortunately the Revolution came, and with it the sale of the property of the church for the benefit of the nation, so M. Nicolas Deville in his turn did not receive a *sou*. Meanwhile, Böhmer and Bassenge became bankrupt. The Cardinal de Rohan at his death left behind him a will by which he appointed the Princess Charlotte de Rohan-Rochefort his residuary legatee, and she accepted administration of the estate on condition that she should not be held responsible to the creditors for any deficiency that might exist.

At the time of the cardinal’s decease he possessed considerable landed property in Baden, and personal property to a large amount, consisting in part of money lent to his relatives, the Prince and Princess de Guéménée, and the Duke de Montbazou, which the princess neglected to recover, and which was consequently lost. The princess sold the lands in Baden, and divided the proceeds

among a few favoured creditors, but Deville obtained little or nothing. After the Restoration—when all the property remaining unsold was returned to its former owners or their heirs, and an indemnity was granted for what had been sold—the princess, it is said, neglected the interests of the creditors by omitting to recover the sums due to the cardinal's estate, and especially those owing by the Guéménée family.

For this evident neglect of her duty as executrix, it was maintained that the princess was responsible in the persons of her heirs, notwithstanding the conditions under which she had undertaken to administer the cardinal's will. In accordance with this view, so recently as the year 1864 an action was brought before the Civil Tribunal of the Seine by the heirs of M. Deville against the Princesses de Rohan-Rochefort, as representatives of the Princess Charlotte de Rohan-Rochefort, to recover the principal sum for which the assignment of the Saint Waast revenues had been given, together with cumulative interest, amounting in the whole to upwards of 2,000,000 francs; but it was argued for the defence that the cardinal's estate had been properly administered by the princess, that the plaintiffs had received the same share as the other creditors, and that they had no legal claim on the defendants. The tribunal took this view of the case, and accordingly rejected the plaintiff's demand with costs. Such was the end, after the lapse of nearly four score years, of perhaps the most famous *cause célèbre* of all time, known in the annals of French jurisprudence as the *Affaire du Collier*.

Just as the Countess de la Motte was, to some extent, the imitator of certain female swindlers of her own era, so has she found imitators in this our own time. Almost at the moment we are writing <sup>1</sup> Paris is talking about an act of swindling which bears a certain resemblance to the Diamond Necklace fraud. It seems that, in the month of February, 1866, a jeweller in Paris, M. Cramer, received a letter sealed with the Prussian arms, and signed "Comte de Schaffgotsch," chamberlain of her majesty the Queen of Prussia, in which he was asked if he was willing to undertake the execution of some models, in brilliants, of a new order which

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the year 1866.



the Queen of Prussia intended to create. The jeweller immediately accepted the commission, and several days afterwards there arrived some drawings understood to have been executed by the queen herself. The jeweller set to work forthwith, and in the course of a few weeks he transmitted to Berlin a magnificent cross surrounded with diamonds. In reply, he received a letter of congratulation accompanied by an order for a dozen more diamond crosses, with a further promise of an order for the crown of the Prince of Hohenzollern as sovereign of the Danubian Principalities. The jeweller was the happiest of men. His fortune was evidently made; but when and how was he to forward the crosses? The count replied that he was just then charged with a diplomatic mission, and would be at Cologne on a particular day, when the decorations could be awaiting him at the chief banker's in that town.

The jeweller accordingly sends the crosses to the house of Oppenheim and Co., informing them that they were to be delivered to the chamberlain of the Queen of Prussia. Some days afterwards the count informed the bankers by letter that he would pass through the town at a certain hour, and begged of them to forward to him the jeweller's parcel by the hands of one of their clerks. This was accordingly done, and the jeweller is subsequently informed by letter that the Queen of Prussia is delighted with the crosses, some more of which her majesty requires.

But nothing was said as to payment, and the jeweller, uneasy in mind, did at last what he should have done at first. He called upon the Prussian ambassador at Paris, who informed him that he had been dealing with a knave, and that the letters were all forged. The jeweller, in a state of great consternation, sets out, under the advice of the ambassador, for Baden, where the Queen of Prussia then is, and obtains an audience of her majesty, by whom he is assured that she is an entire stranger to the whole story of the diamond crosses.

On his return to Paris M. Cramer receives another letter from the pretended count, who insinuates this time that he might himself be decorated with the order of the Red Eagle. The jeweller, however, was now on his guard. The police were communicated with, and they managed to draw the fox into the trap. He was

found to be a man of good family, the son of an old general, and holding rank and title at the Prussian court, but whom a passion for gambling had ruined. The police seized, at the hotel where he put up in Paris, all the jeweller's letters, some diamonds detached from the crosses, with several visiting cards, having the name of the Count von Schaffgotsch on them, together with a blank stamp bearing the arms of the Queen of Prussia. Owing possibly to the high connections of the culprit, the case would appear to have been compromised, for nothing more was heard of this last Diamond swindle.

## XLV.

## SUMMING UP OF THE EVIDENCE AGAINST MARIE-ANTOINETTE.

THE reader who has accompanied us step by step in our narrative, who has weighed our statements one by one, and noted the authorities on which these are based, is perhaps already satisfied of Marie-Antoinette's complete innocence of any kind of participation in the great fraud of the Diamond Necklace, and is convinced of the falsity of the charges brought against her with regard to her presumed intercourse with the Cardinal de Rohan. Should any doubt still linger in his mind, this will be removed, we imagine, on an examination of the annexed summary of facts. If we prove two things, that the queen was in no degree mixed up in the Necklace affair, and that she held no kind of intercourse with Madame de la Motte, then the whole of the countess's calumnies respecting the correspondence carried on between the queen and the cardinal, and their secret meetings at the Little Trianon, necessarily fall to the ground.

Whatever may have been the follies, or say the crimes even, if you please, of which Marie-Antoinette was guilty, and which she more than expiated by her cruel death, complicity in any shape in this contemptible Diamond Necklace fraud is most certainly not one of them.

In the first place, if the Countess de la Motte had been that intimate confidant of the queen which she pretended she was, however secret their relations may have been, she would still have been able to have brought forward some shadow of proof of their existence, some trifling souvenir, for instance, the former possession of which might have been traced to Marie-Antoinette, some little scrap of her handwriting, even though undated and unsigned, some single witness who had once seen her in the queen's presence, or in the queen's apartments, even though this had been a discarded servant, such as the "*bonne citoyenne*," the "*excellente patriote*," Reine Millot,



who deposed against her royal mistress at her trial.<sup>1</sup> Evidence directly compromising the queen in the Necklace affair would perhaps not have been forthcoming at the time of the trial before the Court of Parliament, even if it had been the interest of either party to have produced it ; but during the long years of the Revolution, when the name and memory of Marie-Antoinette were objects of the bitterest hate and scorn, some one among the many individuals acquainted with the intrigues of the court might have been expected to have broken this forced silence, if from no other motive than personal vanity.

And yet not a scintilla of evidence, true or false, against the queen has come to light. In none of the memoirs or letters of the time, written by those who had opportunities of knowing something of the facts, do we find the slightest accusation against the queen with regard to the Diamond Necklace. No one has stated that she was ever seen either with the Necklace itself, or any of the loose diamonds composing part of it, in her possession. No one connected with the court, neither Besenval nor De Lauzun, both on terms of closest intimacy with, and both, to some extent, detractors of the queen, has stated that Madame de la Motte was ever once seen in the queen's company, but all who have made allusion to her, like Lacretelle, Besenval, and Madame Campan, have stated precisely the reverse.<sup>2</sup> If she was in almost daily communication with the queen, as she pretended was the case, she must have been constantly seen by some of the inferior servants ; her friend the gate-keeper of the Little Trianon, for instance, or the *valet de chambre*, Desclaux, who, when the queen had perished by the guillotine, and there was no longer any motive for preserving silence, would have talked of the affair for talking's sake.

What, we may ask, could have been the motive that instigated Marie-Antoinette to obtain possession of the Necklace ? It was certainly not for the purpose of wearing it, for no one ever pretended to have seen it on her person. It was not with the object of selling it piecemeal, to stave off some pressing pecuniary difficulty, for the De la Mottes had the whole of the proceeds ; and in none of the contradictory statements made by them did they ever

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, p. 61 *et seq.*

pretend they were selling the diamonds on the queen's behalf. The statement the count made to the jewellers was, that he inherited the diamonds from his mother; then their joint statement was, that they sold them on behalf of the cardinal; while their final statement was, that they were a present to the countess from the queen, the wage in fact for the dishonourable service which she so unblushingly asserts she rendered to Marie-Antoinette. Supposing the queen to have had some motive for possessing the Necklace which we cannot penetrate, would she have purchased it through such a doubtful pair of agencies as the Countess de la Motte and the Cardinal de Rohan? The French court's resources may have been impoverished, still the royal credit was not yet at a discount, and even if the queen could not have acquired the Necklace on her own terms of credit, yet, considering the readiness with which *fermier-général* Béranger parted with his two hundred thousand livres, she would have had no difficulty in raising whatever amount she required among men of his stamp, such as Baudard de Saint-James and others.

As there is no direct evidence of the queen's having ever had the Necklace, or any of the diamonds belonging to it, let us see what indirect evidence there is that they were never in her possession.

On the 1st of February, 1785, Böhmer and Bassenge deliver the Necklace to the cardinal, who states that it was handed over the same evening to some man professing to be the bearer of a note from the queen, by Madame de la Motte in his presence. The cardinal asserts the man to have been Rétaux de Villette, and the countess's maid-servant deposes to having admitted him to her mistress's apartment just about the hour named. On the 8th of February, within the week, the negotiation with Bette d'Etienville is opened, and he is soon after applied to to go to Holland, and dispose of a large quantity of diamonds. On February 12, the countess commissions Villette to sell some of the diamonds which belonged to the Necklace, and on the 15th he is found offering them for sale. Early in March the count gives Furet, the clock-maker, two diamonds, on account of some clocks he purchased of him; and shortly afterwards the countess is found selling diamonds to both Paris and Regnier, the jewellers, and leaving other diamonds with the latter to have reset. On the 10th of April the count goes to London, having with him, according to Gray, *fully half* of the

diamonds belonging to the Necklace, and among them *all the more valuable ones*. Of this half, Gray states that he bought upwards of two-thirds.

Count de la Motte, in his narrative, admits having sold to Gray what he calls the eighteen oval stones, also thirteen stones of the first quality, six stones forming the two trefoils, four stones between the rose and tassels, sixteen stones from the tassels, in all fifty-seven stones. But Gray, in his declaration, states that he bought eight stones from the *fil autour* (the row of diamonds that encircled the neck), the large pendant brilliant suspended to the centre festoon, eighty of the stones forming the *esclavage*, some (say one-half) of the brilliants forming the two bands at the sides, namely, forty-eight; also four stones at the heads of the tassels, twelve stones from the lower part of the tassels, and thirty smaller stones also belonging to the tassels, in all one hundred and eighty-three stones (instead of fifty-seven according to the count's version), and for which Count de la Motte received in money and goods about two hundred and sixty thousand livres. The count admits having given to Gray twenty-eight stones to set as drop earrings, twenty-two stones from the festoons to make into a necklace, and the button stone to set as a ring, in all fifty-one stones. Gray however declared that he received sixty-one stones for these various purposes.

Madame de la Motte admits having sold to Paris first twenty-two and then sixteen stones, in all thirty-eight stones, for which she received thirty-one thousand livres. She moreover exchanged one stone with a Jew for some china pomade pots and gave Regnier a couple of large stones to mount in rings. The count admits having changed with Furet two of the festoon stones, for which he was allowed two thousand seven hundred livres, having sold or given to Regnier to mount sixteen stones from the tassels, twenty-four very small stones from the sides of the oval stones at the bottom of the tassels, twenty-eight stones encircling the oval pendants, two small stones on each side of the button, six small stones supporting the oval stones between the festoons, and twelve small stones immediately adjoining the ribbon at the top, in all eighty-eight stones. The eight stones encircling the button, and the four stones which supported the tassels, the count admits



having in his possession, but they were not at this time unmounted.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the foregoing we must not omit to note the forty small stones which were intrusted to Rétaux de Villette to sell, and for which, no doubt, a market had been long since found in Paris.

The diamonds, therefore, which the De la Mottes themselves admitted the possession of, and those which were proved to have been in their hands, seem to have been as follows :

Sold to Gray	...	...	...	...	183
Mounted by Gray	...	...	...	...	61
Sold to Paris	...	...	...	...	38
Exchanged with Furet	...	...	...	...	2
Exchanged with a Jew	...	...	...	...	1
Mounted by Regnier in rings	...	...	...	...	2
Sold to, and mounted by Regnier	...	...	...	...	88
Remaining in Count de la Motte's possession	...	...	...	...	12
Intrusted to Villette to sell	...	...	...	...	40
					<hr/> 427 <hr/>

As the Necklace contained six hundred and twenty-nine stones, and four hundred and twenty-seven of these were traceable to the De la Mottes, leaving simply two hundred and two, or less than one-third to be accounted for, it follows that Count de la Motte's statement, to the effect that the queen, or say anybody else even, had "kept two hundred and fifty-six diamonds, comprising the most beautiful part of the Necklace, with ninety-eight small diamonds, and the two finest diamonds of the first size,"<sup>1</sup> in all three hundred and fifty-six diamonds, was, like the generality of his statements respecting the Necklace, a gross lie.

The diamonds parted with seem to have realized the following amounts :

Gray	...	...	260,000 livres or francs.
Paris	...	...	31,000       ,,
Furet	...	...	2,700       ,,
Regnier	...	...	27,000       ,,
			<hr/> 320,700 livres, or about £12,800. <hr/>

Madame de la Motte, in her second memorial, puts down the

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 148 for particulars of the stones which the Count brought back with him to France.

<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, p. 150.

amount received from Paris at 38,000 livres and from Regnier, in money and goods, 58,000 livres, equivalent to an increase of 38,000 livres or upwards of £1,500 to the foregoing amount, bringing up the sum total to £14,300 sterling. If to this we add the value of what the count calls the button stone, for which one thousand guineas were offered him in England, and of the two large brilliants set by Regnier as rings, and valued by him at twenty-five thousand livres, together with the value of the necklace and earrings set by Gray, of the diamond-mounted *bonbonnière*,<sup>1</sup> of the pair of drop earrings set by Regnier, of the eight diamonds encircling the button, and the four others which supported the tassels, together with the forty small stones which Villette tried to sell, we shall arrive at a gross total little short of £20,000.

The Countess de la Motte states that, during one of her confrontations with the Cardinal de Rohan, she said out loud to him, in presence of the judges: "Ever since these gentlemen have been putting interrogatories to us, you know that neither you nor

<sup>1</sup> Beugnot in his "Mémoires" furnishes us with a description of this *bonbonnière*, to which, it will be remembered, both the Count and Countess make allusion. (See *ante*, pp. 153, 223-4.) It would appear, from what Beugnot says, that it was never in the cardinal's possession, though it had been got up to play a part in the fraud which was being practised upon him. Beugnot insinuates that had the officers of justice been more expeditious in their movements, they would have found in Madame de la Motte's jewel-box this *bonbonnière*, which he tells us he had admired there a dozen times. "It was," remarks he, "a black tortoiseshell box, surrounded by large diamonds, exactly alike, and of the finest water; the subject on the top of the box was a rising sun which dispersed the mists on the horizon; you touched a spring, and under this first subject was found a portrait of the queen, clothed in a simple white robe (without any other ornament on her head than her hair, raised up in the fashion of the period, and two earrings falling on her neck one on either side), and holding a rose in her hand, precisely in the same attitude and costume as the character played by Mdlle. d'Oliva in the park of Versailles. They would, moreover, have found in this box two of the cardinal's letters, from which they would have seen that the De la Mottes had made him hope for it, as a token of reconciliation with the queen, and would have seen, too, that they had given him all the details of this magnificent jewel."—*Mémoires du Comte Beugnot*, vol. i. p. 89.

Beugnot is apparently wrong in supposing that this *bonbonnière* escaped the vigilance of the officers of justice, as among the documents relating to the "Affaire du Collier," preserved in the National Archives (X<sup>2</sup> 2576), is a

I have told them a word of truth :"<sup>1</sup> so far as she was concerned, possibly about the truest thing she ever said. To show how unworthy of credit the generality of her statements at the trial were, we will run rapidly through her examinations, and pick out simply such of her assertions as are contradicted by independent testimony, or which she subsequently contradicted herself. Of those numerous statements made by her which the cardinal maintained to be false, we shall say nothing.

Lie 1. That she had never represented she had access to the queen (p. 220).<sup>2</sup> She told Grenier that she had reinstated the cardinal in the good graces of the queen, who dared refuse her nothing (p. 237).

2. That she had never shown any letters purporting to be from the queen, for she had never been honoured with any such letters (p. 220). Putting aside D'Oliva's evidence on this subject (p. 237), we have that of Grenier, who expressly states that she showed him a letter which she said had been written to her by the queen, but would not allow him to read it (p. 237).

3. That all she knew of D'Oliva was from casually meeting her in the Palais Royal (p. 220). She never met her in the Palais Royal, as she herself subsequently admitted.

4. That she had never told D'Oliva she was a lady of the court, on terms of intimacy with the queen (p. 221).

5. That she had never shown D'Oliva letters purporting to have been written by the queen (p. 221). If not, why, at the confrontation, did she wink at D'Oliva, and make signs to her, at this part of her evidence? (p. 237).

memorandum without heading, date, or signature, which sets forth, that "among the effects found at Bar-sur-Aube in the house of Madame de la Motte, was a box with a portrait of the queen holding a rose," which portrait, it goes on to say, the Sieur Malus, treasurer of finance, pretended he had orders to withdraw, but having been challenged by the Sieur Guichard, the procureur-général's substitute, to produce his orders, he could only bring forward a letter addressed to him by the contrôleur-général; whereupon the Sieur Guichard notifies that on the morrow he will render an account of the above facts to the procureur-général, who there is every reason to believe will bring them to the notice of his majesty's keeper of the seals and the Baron de Breteuil.

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires Justificatifs de la Comtesse de la Motte," p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> These references are to the present volume.



6. That the entire story of dressing up D'Oliva to personate the queen, and of the midnight meeting in the park, was a foolish and incredible fable, most wretchedly concocted by the cardinal (p. 221). Subsequently she admits its truth, but pretends the meeting was a mere pleasantry got up to quiet the cardinal (p. 245). Afterwards, in her "Mémoires Justificatifs," she says it was all arranged at the suggestion of the queen (p. 87).

7. That she never gave one thousand or three thousand livres, or any money whatever, to D'Oliva (p. 221). Putting aside D'Oliva's circumstantial statement, with dates and figures (p. 95), Villette admitted having taken her three hundred livres on behalf of the countess, and Father Loth proved having taken another four hundred livres to her for her upholsterer.

8. That she never received either the fifty thousand or the hundred thousand livres which the Baron de Planta conveyed to her from the cardinal (p. 221). The Baron de Planta swore that he handed her both these amounts (p. 236). If she did not receive them, how else did she support her extravagant expenditure at this period of her career? Her stories about the liberal gifts she had received from distinguished persons were one by one proved to be false.

9. That the contract was never given to her to obtain the queen's approval and signature to it (p. 222).

10. That the said approval and signature were not written by any person she knew (p. 222). Villette confessed to having written them by her direction (p. 244), and thereby admitted he had been guilty of forgery, which he would hardly have done had it not been the truth. Although Madame de la Motte adhered to her denial of these facts at all her examinations, in her "Life" (vol. i. p. 345) she admits that Villette forged both signature and *approuvés* in her presence.

11. That the story about the cardinal bringing the Necklace to her house, and the casket containing it being handed over to a person who came with a note professing to be from the queen, was absolutely false from beginning to end (p. 223). She subsequently admits the truth of all this in her "Mémoires Justificatifs." (See p. 127.)

12. That she received two boxes of diamonds from the cardinal

in the presence of Cagliostro (p. 226). Cagliostro denied this, and Villette emphatically stated that Cagliostro was entirely innocent of any complicity in the Necklace affair (p. 245).

13. That the Count de la Motte went to England to sell the diamonds on behalf of the cardinal, and having done so, landed the cardinal on his return drafts for one hundred and twenty-one thousand livres and various articles of jewellery received in exchange (pp. 226-7). The countess in her "Life" says not a word of this, but asserts (vol. i. p. 355 *et seq.*) that she received the diamonds as a present from the queen, and showed them to the cardinal, by whose advice she sent her husband abroad to sell them on her own, certainly not on the cardinal's account.

14. That she neither knew nor suspected that any of the diamonds sold by her and her husband formed portions of the Necklace (p. 228). She had previously stated the diamonds sold did belong to the Necklace.

15. That she never gave thirty thousand livres to the cardinal to be handed to the jewellers (p. 228). For what purpose, then, did she borrow thirty-five thousand livres from her notary on the very day? It is true she states that she borrowed this amount to lend to Madame de Crussol, but why did she not call Madame de Crussol to prove the fact?

16. That she had no such transactions with Regnier as those deposed to by him (p. 236). When Regnier produces his books in support of his statement, she admits the whole of them, and attributes her former denial to her bad memory.

17. That Villette did not write any letters to the cardinal in the name of the queen (p. 245). Villette himself confessed to having written a considerable number (p. 244).

18. That she had previously deposed to having seen a letter in the hands of the cardinal, purporting to be from the queen, and saying, "The jewel is superb" (p. 259). She had never deposed to anything of the kind.

19. That Laporte deposed she had told him a hundred times she would have nothing to do with the sale of the Necklace (p. 260). No such assertion as this is to be found in Laporte's deposition.

Of recent writers on the subject of the Diamond Necklace whose

versions of the affair are considered damaging to the reputation of the queen, M. Louis Blanc,<sup>1</sup> is the one to whom the most frequent reference is made. But M. Louis Blanc, no matter in whatever direction his sympathies may lie, is too honest a writer to wilfully misrepresent the truth. He does not assert, therefore, that the queen was a party to the fraud, although he insinuates that there are certain grounds for believing she was mixed up with the transaction. We propose, therefore, to examine the arguments which he brings forward inculpatory of the queen, and to see how far these are capable of being refuted.

In the arguments which M. Louis Blanc advances to prove that an intimacy subsisted between Madame de la Motte and the queen, and that the latter carried on an intrigue with the Cardinal de Rohan, and was a party to the purchase of the Necklace, although he does not exactly maintain the genuineness of the letters said to have passed between the queen and the cardinal, he insinuates as much, and entirely ignores the fact of Villette's confession that these letters were written by him. The same may be said with regard to Madame de la Motte's presumed intimacy with Marie-Antoinette. She boasted, observes M. Louis Blanc, of her relations with the queen, which she would not have done had there been no foundation for them, for fear of the imposture being discovered; which is equivalent to saying that people will not tell lies for fear they should be found out, a proposition which the amount of falsehood current in the world proves to be untenable.

M. Louis Blanc dwells upon the fact of Madame de la Motte having desired the jewellers to be very cautious in their dealings with the cardinal, but he says nothing of the excellent use she put this to in her defence, and which proves she had an ulterior object in acting as she did. In like manner she made all she could of the circumstance of her having declined a commission on the sale of the Necklace. But what did she want with a commission?—she meant to have the Necklace itself. To receive a commission from the jewellers for having cheated them out of their property was a little too much for even the Countess de la Motte.

The box containing the Necklace, says M. Louis Blanc, was given to Lesclaux [Desclaux], the queen's *valet de chambre*. The

<sup>1</sup> See his "Histoire de la Révolution Française," vol. ii.



supposition is, that he was known to the cardinal, who parted with the box without taking any receipt for it.

The cardinal declared that Villette was the person to whom the box was given ; and Villette was certainly there at the time, for the countess's *femme de chambre* proved having opened the door to him, and admitting him to Madame de la Motte's apartment. It is true that a striking difference existed between the individual described by the cardinal and Rétaux de Villette ; but this proves but little, for if the countess could trick out a Palais Royal courtesan with sufficient art to palm her off upon the cardinal as Marie-Antoinette, whom the cardinal did know, she would certainly have been competent to transform the forger Villette into the fair-complexioned, light-haired, slim *valet de chambre* Desclaux, whom the cardinal did *not* know.

M. Louis Blanc states Madame de la Motte informed the cardinal that the queen would acknowledge the receipt of the Necklace the next day by a secret sign, which was given, an important fact admitted by the Abbé Georgel himself.

We do not find that Madame de la Motte made any such statement. She says the queen wrote a note on the following day acknowledging the receipt of the Necklace.<sup>1</sup> As to the secret sign no one besides the Abbé Georgel, whose narrative M. Louis Blanc admits is full of grave errors, says a word about it, not even the cardinal.

As the time approached for the payment for the Necklace, Madame de la Motte, says M. Louis Blanc, manifests no anxiety.

She manifests every anxiety. She borrows thirty-five thousand livres from her notary on the security of her jewels, thirty thousand of which she takes to the cardinal for him to hand to the jewellers as interest on the purchase money, and thereby induce them to wait. She neither dines, nor sups, nor sleeps at home on that day, her anxiety is so great.

The cardinal declared to M. Baudard de Saint-James, says M. Louis Blanc, that he had seen in the queen's hands the seven hundred thousand livres destined for the first payment on account of the Necklace. Böhmer, too, informs Madame Campan that the cardinal had told him he had seen the queen take the money from a portfolio in a Sèvres porcelain secretary.

<sup>1</sup> "Life of the Countess de la Motte, by herself," vol. i. p. 349.

Presuming the cardinal to have said what is stated, it proves nothing against Marie-Antoinette. It was an exaggeration on his part of something which Madame de la Motte had told him; in plain language a lie, told by him to reassure the jewellers and Baudard de Saint-James, who was one of their largest creditors.

M. Louis Blanc tells us that the cardinal hides Madame de la Motte, for fear she should let out the secret of the correspondence, and presses her to fly beyond the Rhine.

All this is denied by the cardinal, and his word is equally worthy of credit with that of the Countess de la Motte, whose statement M. Louis Blanc has adopted.

M. Louis Blanc mentions as a point in the Countess's favour, that after the arrest of the cardinal she refuses to fly.

It was three o'clock in the morning when, worn out by excitement and fatigue, she had great need of rest, and when she did not believe the danger so imminent as it proved to be, that she refused to fly. What she would have done a few hours later, had she not been arrested in the meanwhile, is another question.

According to M. Louis Blanc the authorities refused to arrest Count de la Motte.

The police agents who arrested the countess had no instructions to arrest her husband, whose complicity in the fraud was not then suspected. The count, however, took good care not to allow them a second opportunity, for in a very few hours he made for the coast as fast as post horses could convey him. M. Louis Blanc complains that Madame de la Motte's explanations of the confessions of D'Oliva and Villette, and of the deposition of Gray the jeweller, are not allowed to figure in the report of the trial.

M. Louis Blanc has fallen into a grave error here. The countess's explanations of these different matters figure at full length in the verbatim reports of her two examinations, preserved in the National Archives.<sup>1</sup> Gray's declaration, too, published in the cardinal's "*Pièces Justificatives*," was, we should imagine, filed by the registrar of the Court.

The silence of the queen on receiving the jeweller's letter of July 12th is regarded by M. Louis Blanc as evidence of her guilt.

<sup>1</sup> No. X<sup>2</sup> 2576. See also the Appendix to Campardon's "*Marie-Antoinette et le Procès du Collier*," pp. 271-389.

Marie-Antoinette read this letter with no particular attention, and burnt it, says Madame Campan, the moment afterwards in her presence. There was a certain mystery in the language—the Necklace itself not being even mentioned—which, though it might have been clear enough to the queen had she been the purchaser of the jewel, was otherwise full of ambiguity. Besides, she had a firm conviction that Böhmer was somewhat touched in his head—a conviction, by the way, very generally entertained by persons about the court, and openly alluded to during the discussion on the sentence in the Court of Parliament (p. 268).

The cardinal's well-known diplomatic skill, says M. Louis Blanc, made it impossible for him to have been deceived.

Diplomatic skill counts for little against the arts and wiles of an intriguing woman, and one with whom, it must be remembered, her dupe was madly infatuated; for does not Beugnot tell us that, whilst glancing over some of the hundreds of letters from the Cardinal de Rohan to Madame de la Motte, he saw with pity "the ravages which the delirium of love, aided by that of ambition, had wrought on the mind of this unhappy man?"<sup>1</sup> This is the keynote to much that may seem inexplicable in the cardinal's conduct in the latter stages of the Necklace affair.

According to M. Louis Blanc Madame de la Motte endeavours to screen the queen.

Whatever she may have done at her preliminary examination, she did not screen the queen before the Court of Parliament, but pretended she had seen in the cardinal's possession two hundred letters written to him by Marie-Antoinette. All the countess's aim was to screen herself, no matter whom she sacrificed to attain this object.

M. Louis Blanc says that the Count de la Motte proclaims his intention of speaking the truth, but M. de Vergennes will not consent to his being brought to Paris.

When the trial was over, the count made a great parade of the evidence he could have given. He was too good a judge, however, to come forward at the trial. M. de Vergennes, moreover, could hardly have refused his consent to the count's coming to

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 179.



Paris out of consideration for the queen, as he had long been her secret enemy, and was an admitted partisan of the cardinal's.

It is asserted by M. Louis Blanc that the Princess de Lamballe visits the Salpêtrière, and gives alms to the superior for the countess.

M. Louis Blanc does not state whence he derived this information, which we find repeated by another writer on the dubious authority of an anonymous journal written prior to March, 1801.<sup>1</sup> The countess herself, however, makes no allusion to this circumstance either in her "*Mémoires Justificatifs*" or in her "*Life*."

Finally, M. Louis Blanc asserts that the Count de la Motte is paid two hundred thousand livres to suppress the publication of the countess's "*Mémoires Justificatifs*."

No authority is given for this statement, and we doubt if any such large amount, or indeed anything approaching to it, was ever paid. Still, whatever may have been the sum paid for the suppression of these "*Mémoires*," even if the queen were a party to the transaction, it proves really nothing against her. Our own criminal records abound in instances of victims submitting to extortion for a long series of years, to save themselves from threatened exposure—to escape being accused of some degrading crime of which they are known to have been perfectly innocent.

It is no part of our plan to enter upon a defence of Marie-Antoinette against those other accusations which the bitter hatred of individuals and the fierce passions of the time laid to her charge. One of her ablest defenders has said, that "all of youth, all of the woman, all of humanity in the unfortunate Queen of France, is explained by these words of the Prince de Ligne: 'The queen's pretended gallantry was nothing more than a sentiment of profound friendship for a few individuals and a queen's womanly coquetry, that aimed at pleasing every one.'" Time, which rights all things, is at last doing Marie-Antoinette justice, and "she whom patriotism accused, and demagogism condemned, humanity has well nigh absolved."

<sup>1</sup> M. de Lescure in "*La Princesse de Lamballe, Sa Vie—Sa Mort*," pp. 189-190.



## APPENDIX.

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### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DIAMOND NECKLACE, WITH ITS "ESCLAVAGE" AND TASSELS;

Based on the description given in the "Pièces Justificatives pour le Cardinal de Rohan," corrected by careful comparison with a *fac-simile* of the drawing of the Necklace prepared by the crown jewellers.

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1. The *fil autour* (the row of diamonds encircling the neck), composed of seventeen brilliants, weighing from 18 to 33 grains each.

Count de la Motte says thirteen of these stones were bought by Gray (see *ante*, p. 146), but the latter states that he only purchased eight. Two were set by Regnier as rings (see *ante*, p. 140).

2. Forty-one brilliants, forming the three festoons suspended from the *fil autour* above, weighing from 12 to 20 grains each, estimating one with another.

Twenty-two of these were set by Gray, as a necklace for the countess (see *ante*, p. 147); two were exchanged with Furet; one was set as a ring for the count; the remainder were sold to Paris (see *ante*, p. 148).

3. Two pendant brilliants hanging within the side festoons, each weighing 50 grains.

The count says these were bought by Gray. Together with the other pendant brilliants, they formed part of the eighteen oval-stones (see *ante*, p. 144).

4. Two pendant brilliants hanging between the large and smaller festoons.

The count says these were also bought by Gray (see *ante*, p. 144).

5. Six small stones supporting the above.

These were among the diamonds delivered by the count to Regnier (see *ante*, p. 148).



6. A pendant brilliant, suspended from the *fil autour* above by a trefoil, and weighing 34 grains. A stone of superb quality.

The count says this was bought by Gray (see *ante*, p. 144).

7. Fourteen brilliants surrounding the above, weighing  $7\frac{5}{8}$  carats.

Delivered by the count to Regnier (see *ante*, p. 148).

8. Three brilliants, forming the trefoil, each weighing 13 grains.

These with the stones of the second trefoil, must have been the six diamonds which the count speaks of as forming the rose of two oval ones, and which he says he exchanged with Gray (see *ante*, p. 146).

9. A pendant brilliant, at the lower part of the centre festoon, hanging from a trefoil, and weighing 45 grains.

Bought by Gray (see *ante*, p. 144).

10. Fourteen brilliants, surrounding the above, weighing 10 carats.

Delivered by the count to Regnier (see *ante*, p. 148).

11. Three brilliants, forming the trefoil, weighing from 17 to 20 grains. Stones of extreme beauty.

Exchanged by the count with Gray (see *ante*, p. 146).

12. One hundred and twenty-eight fine brilliants, forming the *esclavage* from the *fil* above to the knots of the two centre tassels; the stones all matching, and weighing 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 grains each.

Gray bought eighty of these.

13. Sixty-two small brilliants, inserted in the *esclavage*, weighing 3 and 4 grains each.

14. A brilliant, forming the centre of the rose in the middle of the *esclavage*. A very handsome stone, without the slightest flaw, weighing 45 grains.

This was the button stone valued at one thousand guineas, which Gray set for the count as a ring (see *ante*, p. 147).

15. Eight brilliants surrounding the above, weighing 12 and 13 grains each.

Retained by the count.

16. Ninety-six brilliants, forming the two side bands: the stones assorted, and weighing 6, 7, 8, and 9 grains each.

Half, or thereabouts, of these stones, were bought by Gray; twelve were delivered by the count to Regnier (see *ante*, p. 148).

17. Forty-six small brilliants, inserted in the said bands, weighing 2 and 3 grains each.

These must have been the stones intrusted to Villette to dispose of.

18. Eight brilliants, at the heads of the tassels. Superb stones matching with each other, and weighing 14 and 15 grains each.

Four of these were bought by Gray.

19. Twelve pendant brilliants, hanging at the bottom of the tassels, remarkable for their whiteness, and weighing from 16 to 26 grains each.

Bought by Gray. They formed part of the eighteen oval stones (see *ante*, p. 144).

20. Twenty-four very small stones at the sides of the above.

Delivered by the count to Regnier (see *ante*, p. 148).

21. Sixteen round-shaped brilliants in the tassels, weighing from 11 to 14 grains each.

Delivered by the count to Regnier (see *ante*, p. 148).

22. Twelve round-shaped brilliants in the tassels, weighing from 8 to 10 grains each.

23. Thirty round-shaped brilliants in the tassels, weighing from 6 to 8 grains each.

Gray states that he bought the whole of these. The count says he only parted with sixteen (see *ante*, p. 147).

24. Thirty round-shaped brilliants in the tassels, weighing from 4 to 6 grains each.

Twenty-eight of these were given to Gray, to mount as drop earrings (see *ante*, p. 147).

25. Fifty-two small round-shaped brilliants in the tassels.

Twenty-two of the largest of these were sold to Paris; others the count had mounted for a watch-chain (see *ante*, p. 148).

A SELECTION FROM THE LETTERS WHICH THE COUNTESS  
DE LA MOTTE PRETENDED HAD PASSED BETWEEN THE  
QUEEN AND THE CARDINAL DE ROHAN.

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FROM THE QUEEN TO THE CARDINAL.

April 28, 1784.

"I read with indignation the manner in which you have been deceived by your niece. I never had any knowledge of the letters you mention to me, and I question whether they ever existed. The persons you complain of have in reality contributed to your disgrace, but the methods they used to effect it were very different from those you suppose. I have forgotten all, and require of you never to speak to me of anything that has reference to what is past. The account which the countess has given me of your behaviour towards her has made a stronger impression on me than all you have written to me. I hope you will never forget that it is to her you are indebted for your pardon, as also for the letter I write to you.

"I have always looked upon you as a very inconsistent and indiscreet man, which opinion necessarily obliges me to great reservedness; and I own to you, that nothing but a conduct quite the reverse of that you have held can regain my confidence and merit my esteem."

FROM THE CARDINAL TO THE QUEEN.

May 6, 1784.

"Yes; I am the happiest mortal breathing! My *master* pardons me: he grants me his confidence; and, to complete my happiness, he has the goodness to smile upon his *slave*, and to give him public signals of a right understanding. Such unexpected favours caused in me so great an emotion, that I for a moment was apprehensive lest the motive should be suspected by the extraordinary answers which I made. But I soon recovered when I saw my absence of



mind was attributed to quite another motive ; upon which, I assumed an air of approbation, in order to divert observation from the real object. This circumstance is a warning to me, to direct henceforth my words and actions in a more prudential manner.

“I know how to appreciate all the obligations I am under to the charming countess. In whatever situation I may chance to be, I shall be gratefully mindful of all that she has done in my behalf. So much for that. All depends on my *master*. The facility he has of making beings happy, makes his *slave* wish for the means of following his footsteps and being the echo of his good pleasure.”

## FROM THE QUEEN TO THE CARDINAL.

May 15, 1784.

“I cannot disapprove of the desire you have of seeing me. I could wish, in order to facilitate you the means, to remove all obstacles that oppose it ; but you would not have me act imprudently, to bring about more compendiously a thing which you must be persuaded you will shortly obtain.

“You have enemies who have done you much disservice with the *minister*<sup>1</sup> (the countess will tell you the meaning of that word, which you must use for the future). The turning of them out cannot but be advantageous to you. I know the changes and revolutions that are to happen, and have calculated all the circumstances which will infallibly bring forward the opportunities which I desire. In the interim be very cautious, above all, discreet ; and, as there is no foreseeing what may happen, be reserved, and greatly perplexed in what you hereafter write to me.”

## FROM THE CARDINAL TO THE QUEEN.

July 29, 1784.

“My adorable *master*, permit your *slave* to express his joy for the favours you have conferred upon him. That charming *rose* lies upon my heart. I will preserve it to my latest breath. It will incessantly recall to me the first instant of my happiness.

“In parting from the countess, I was so transported, that I found myself imperceptibly brought to the charming spot which you had made choice of. After having crossed the shrubbery, I

<sup>1</sup> The King.

almost despaired of knowing again the place where your beloved *slave* threw himself at your feet. Destined, no doubt, to experience during that delightful night none but happy sensations, I found again the pleasing turf, gently pressed by those pretty little feet. I rushed upon it as if you had still been there, and kissed with as much ardour your grassy seat, as that fair hand which was yielded to me with a grace and kindness that belong to none but my dear *master*. Enchanted, as it were, to that bewitching spot, I found the greatest difficulty in quitting it ; and I should certainly have spent the night there, had I not been apprehensive of making my attendants uneasy, who knew of my being out.

“Soon after my return home, I went to bed, but pressed for a considerable time a restless pillow. My imagination, struck with your adorable person, was filled during my slumbers with the most delightful sensations. Happy night ! that proved the brightest day in my life ! Adorable *master*, your *slave* cannot find expressions to describe his felicity ! You yesterday witnessed his embarrassment, his bashfulness, his silence, the natural effects of the most genuine love ! You alone in the universe could produce what he never before experienced. Enveloped in these pleasing sensations, I sometimes imagine it to be only a visionary felicity, and that I am still under the influence of a dream ; but, combining all the circumstances of my happiness, recalling to mind the enchanting sound of that voice which pronounced my pardon, I give way to an excess of joy, accompanied with exclamations, which, if they were overheard, would argue distraction. Such is my condition, which I deem supremely happy, and wish for its continuance the remainder of my life.

“I shall not depart till I have heard from you.”

FROM THE QUEEN TO THE CARDINAL.

August 16, 1784.

“An observation made to me yesterday, with an air of curiosity and suspicion, will prevent my going to-day to T—— (Trianon), but will not, for all that, deprive me of seeing my amiable *slave*. The *minister* sets out at eleven, to go a-hunting at R—— (Rambouillet) : his return will be very late, or, to speak more properly, next morning. I hope, during his absence, to make

myself amends for the tediousness and contradiction I have experienced for these two days past. Imprudent conduct has brought me to that pass, that I cannot, without danger, remove objects that are displeasing to me, and who haunt me. They have so thoroughly studied me, and know so little how to feign and dissemble, that they attribute my change to nothing but a discretion, which to them appears blameworthy; it is therefore very essential to be on one's guard, to avoid all surprise.

"The daring question put to me, persuades me that my confidence has been abused, as well as my good-nature, and that advantage has been taken of circumstances to fetter my will. I have a way of coming at information concerning it, but I will first consult thee. As thou wilt play the principal part in the scheme I have devised, we must needs agree as well on this point as we did last Friday on the S——. This comparison will make thee laugh, no doubt; but, as it is a just one, and I desire to give thee a proof of it to-night, before we talk of serious matters, observe exactly what follows: Do thou assume the garb of a messenger, and, with a parcel in thy hand, be walking about at half-past eleven under the porch of the chapel: I will send the countess, who shall serve thee for a guide, and conduct thee up a little back staircase to an apartment, where thou wilt find the object of thy desires."

FROM THE QUEEN TO THE CARDINAL.

*January 15, 1785.*

"If it had not been my intention there should be a mystery in the purchase of the jewel, I certainly should not have employed you to procure it for me. I am not accustomed to enter thus into treaty with my jewellers, and this way of proceeding is so much the more contrary to what I owe to myself, as two words were sufficient to put me in possession of that object. I am surprised that you dare to propose to me such an arrangement; but let there be no more said about it. It is a trifle that has occasioned me to make a few reflections, which I will impart to you when opportunity offers. The countess will deliver to you your paper. I am sorry you have given yourself so much trouble to no purpose."



## FROM THE QUEEN TO THE CARDINAL.

*January 29, 1785.*

"How is this? Affectation with me? Why, my friend, ought people in our predicament to act under restraint, to seek for shifts, and deal with insincerity? Dost thou know that thy reserve, and thy false pride, drew upon thee the letter thou hast received; and that but for the countess, who has told me all, I should have attributed that pretended arrangement to quite a different motive. Fortunately, all is cleared up. The countess will deliver thee the writing, and explain the motives by which I have been actuated in this matter. As I am supposed ignorant of the confidence thou hast shewn her, as also of the token of trust that thou wilt give her, by laying before her our particular engagements, that is a more than sufficient reason to make thee secure, and remove all difficulties. Thou wilt keep the writing, and deliver it to none but me.

"I hope, notwithstanding my disorder, to see thee before the holiday. I expect the countess to-morrow. I will tell her whether I shall be able to receive from my *slave* the object which had nearly set us at variance."

## FROM THE QUEEN TO THE CARDINAL.

*July 19, 1785.*

"I believe I have informed you of the disposal of the sum which I destined for the object in question, and that probably I should not fulfil the engagements till my return from Fontainebleau. The countess will remit to you thirty thousand livres, to pay the interest. The privation of the capital is to be taken into consideration, and this compensation will make them easy.

"You complain, and I say not a word: a very extraordinary circumstance; time will, perhaps, acquaint you with the motive of my silence. I do not love suspicious people, especially when there is so little reason for it. I possess a principle I never will recede from. Your last conversation is very opposite to what you related to me at a preceding period. Reflect upon it, and if your memory serves you faithfully, by comparing the eras, you will judge what I am to think of your pressing solicitations."

AN EPITOME OF THE "FIRST PROCÈS-VERBAL DESCRIPTIVE OF THE DOCUMENTS TENDING TO ESTABLISH CRIMINALITY. SEP. 9, 10, 11, 1785."<sup>1</sup>

(Preserved in the National Archives—Section, *Procès du Collier*, Series X<sup>2</sup>, No. 18,576.)

THE *procès verbal* in question is drawn up in the quaint legal phraseology of the *ancien régime*, and abounds not only in the tautological repetition and iteration in which lawyers have ever delighted, but in queer sounding scraps of the obsolete jargon of eighteenth century procedure.

It commences by setting forth that in the year 1785 on Friday the 9th September at three in the afternoon, Jean Baptiste Maximilien Pierre Titon, king's counsellor in his High Court of Parliament, commissioner in the present case, assisted by Maître Etienne Fremyn, barrister of the court, and one of the chief clerks of the criminal registry of the said court, was applied to by Maître Pierre de Laurencel, one of the deputies of the king's procureur-général. The latter stated, with the customary prolixity of gentlemen of the long robe, that by virtue of royal letters patent, issued at St. Cloud on September 5th, empowering the High Court to take cognizance of the facts therein set forth and all matters appertaining thereto, and in accordance with a decree pronounced by the said High Court on September 7th, empowering the procureur-général to proceed "against the authors, abettors, participators, accomplices and adherents as well of the transaction itself as of the forgery of the queen's handwriting and signature," it had been ordered that the documents tending to prove criminality or to throw light on the case which should be produced

<sup>1</sup> It should be mentioned that with a single exception—a letter of Madame de la Motte's, which is given on page 187 *et seq.* of this work—none of the documents herein referred to are now in existence. They are believed to have been destroyed during the Revolution.

by the king's procureur-général, should be deposited at the criminal registry of the court, and should there remain, and that a *procès-verbal* descriptive of the said documents should be drawn up in presence of the deputies of the king's procureur-général. Both classes of documents had been duly deposited by the king's procureur-général at the criminal registry of the court on the 7th September. Consequently he (Maître de Laurencel) now appeared to assist in drawing up the descriptive *procès-verbal* of the documents tending to prove criminality *only*.

Titon, having duly certified this application, gives orders to Maître Fremyn to at once produce the said documents tending to prove criminality.

Here follows a minute description of each of the bundle of fifteen documents produced. The size of the paper, the number of pages written on, the number of lines on each page, the words with which each page begins and finishes, the style of the signatures, the fact whether or not there were any interlineations, or words struck out or underlined ; all these particulars are minutely recorded in every instance.

The first document, entitled "Mémoire instructif," written on two sheets of paper à la *Tellière*, contains four full pages and three lines and three words on the fifth page, all apparently written by the same hand, and is signed "Bohmer, Bassenge, le Card. de Rhoan," (*sic*). It is noted that there is nothing scratched out or written over, but that on the twenty-eighth line of the second page, are added in parentheses and in a smaller hand the words "which was the 1st February."

The second document is "a declaration made to the king by Mgr. the Cardinal de Rohan" consisting of fifteen lines written on one side of a large sheet of letter paper, beginning with the words, "A woman whom I have believed" and terminating "Md. la Mothe d. Vallois." This must be the statement written by the cardinal at the suggestion of the king immediately prior to his arrest.

The third is a receipt dated the 30th July 1785, for the sum of 30,000 livres, written on half a sheet of letter paper folded in two, and signed Bôhmer & Company.

The fourth is an envelope, consisting of a large sheet of letter



paper, outside of which is written "This paper, in case of my death, belongs and must be handed to M. Böhmer, jeweller to the Queen. . . . this 18th February 1785."

The next document which is worthy of a more detailed notice is described in the following minute terms in the *procès-verbal*.

"The fifth document, inclosed in the said envelope and headed '*Propositions and conditions of price and payment*,' is written half way across the front and the back of the first leaf of a sheet of letter paper. The first page on the front side containing eighteen lines, the first of which consists of the word '*Proposals*' and the eighteenth of the words '*4th, one might facilitate*,' remarking that below the third line of the said first front page, is a flourish and that at the margin of the said page, which is left blank, is written three times the word '*approved*' in a very fine handwriting, differing from that filling the page; namely, the first time in front of the sixth line, the second time in front of the eleventh line, and the third and last time in front of the sixteenth line. The second page on the back containing twelve lines, the first of which consists of these words '*calm in the matter*,' and the twelfth line of these '*later on*,' remarking likewise that on the marginal half of the said back page is written twice in a very fine handwriting the word '*approved*,' the first time in front of the third line, and the second in front of the tenth: remarking likewise that at the side of the said writing, written in three lines on half the right hand margin, are these words, '*Accepted the above arrangements, the 29th January 1785*,' and below the signature, '*Böhmer & Company*,' and still lower down a flourish: remarking besides that on the half margin to the left in front of the word '*accepted*' are written these words, '*Approved, Marie-Antoinette de France*,' in a very fine handwriting, apparently similar to the other words '*approved*' contained in the said document, and below a dash of the pen, and still lower down a flourish; that besides there is no erasure, interlineation, or word written above another in the said document."

The sixth is a short letter of three lines and two words, apparently from the cardinal to Böhmer, as it commences, "I should like, M. Bohmer," and bears a memorandum in another hand, beginning, "Received this letter from monseigneur." It is addressed to "Monsieur, Monsieur Bemer (*sic*), jeweller to the Queen,

Rue de Vendosme, near the Tennis Court at Paris," and is countersigned "Card. de Rohan," and to it is attached a seal unbroken, and apparently bearing the arms of a cardinal.

The seventh is a letter of ten lines dated Paris the 1st February, 1785, commencing, "Monsieur Böhmer, her Majesty," and signed by the cardinal.

The eighth is a more lengthy document, filling three and a half pages of paper *à la Tellière*. It is a memorandum dated Paris, August 17th, 1785, signed Ste. James (who thus spells his name), and appears to explain his financial transactions with Böhmer. It is carefully noted with regard to this document that although there are neither erasures, interlineations, nor words written over others, that certain specified portions are underlined.

The ninth, enclosed in the former, is a copy of Böhmer's acknowledgment of his debt to Saint James, and is dated the 16th March, 1785.

It being now nine in the evening, the completion of the *procès-verbal* was adjourned to the following day, when, with the same formality and a due amount of signing and countersigning Maître de Laurencel renewed his application, and Councillor Commissioner Titon ordered that Maître Fremyn should comply with it. Whereupon the last named at once produced

The tenth document, filling four full pages of paper *à la Tellière*, containing a statement of the cardinal's examination in the Bastille, dated the 18th August, and conjointly signed "Le Card. de Rohan, Thiroux de Crosne, Delauney and Delachapelle." The *procès-verbal*, which gives as usual the words at the beginning and end of every page and the number of lines, notes that the two first words of the sixth line of the first page and sixth word of the seventh line of the third page are struck out, and that the sixth word of the thirteenth line of the fourth page is underlined.

The eleventh "is a document on a sheet of large letter paper containing three pages, the first of which of twenty-three lines begins with these words '*Confidential Declaration of Monseigneur the Cardinal de Rohan,*' and finishes at the twenty-third line by these, '*in the month of July 1784, I.*' The second page is of twenty-five lines, the first beginning with these words, '*met in effect at the hour appointed,*' and the twenty-fifth ending with these,

'*that they have even wished.*' We have remarked that the seventh word which seems to be the word '*woman,*' is struck out, and there has been substituted for it above, the word '*person.*' We have also remarked in the fourth line, between the word '*this*' and the word '*person,*' is written by way of insertion and above, the word '*same.*' We have further remarked that between the eighteenth and the nineteenth line are written as an interlineation the words, '*my absurd,*' and that in the nineteenth line the fifth word is struck out. The third and last page is of twenty-one lines, the first beginning with these words '*to refuse and that I have forced them to accept,*' and the twenty-first line ending with these, *the Sieurs Böhmer.*' We have remarked that in the tenth line, the ninth word is written over, that in the eleventh (line) the third and fourth words are likewise written over, that the last word of the sixteenth line is also written over, that in the seventeenth line the first and the third words are also written over. We have further remarked that under the twenty-first line of the said third page are three lines, and the date of the year 1785, forming the fourth line, in a different handwriting from that comprising the above written document, the first of which lines begins by these words, '*I approve the writing,*' and the third line ends with these, '*done at the Bastille this 20th August,*' and below the signature '*Le Card. de Rohan,*' with flourish."

The twelfth consists of fourteen lines written on the first page of a sheet of paper *à la Tellière* beginning "I the undersigned confess," and ending "of diamonds," beneath which is the signature, "Louis Jean Marie Desclaux." This is the Lesclos or Desclos, belonging to the queen's household, to whom Madame de la Motte pretended she handed the casket containing the Necklace.

The thirteenth, filling two and a half pages of paper *à la Tellière* and commencing, "To-day the seventeenth August," appears from words referring to drawers and articles of furniture, quoted as commencing and ending the second page, as those of "*procès-verbal,*" with which it concludes to have been a *procès-verbal* of the search made at the Palais-Cardinal, for the grand almoner's papers. It bears the signature of the Cardinal de Rohan, the Marshal de Castries, the Count de Vergennes, the Baron de Breteuil, and the lieutenant of police, Thiroux de Crosne.



The fourteenth, closed and fastened to the preceding with a blue ribbon, fills two pages of a small sheet of letter paper, and commences, "Send for B. this morning," but the few words quoted afford no clue as to what it refers to. It is merely signed with a flourish, and headed on the first page "No. 1."

The fifteenth, also closed and fastened to the two preceding ones with blue ribbons, is likewise written on a small sheet of letter paper. It is headed "No. 2," and the words quoted—"The last price shall be fixed," "in six months," "shall be carried to," and "in the afternoon,"—seem to indicate some note referring to the purchase and delivery of the Necklace, found in all probability amongst the cardinal's papers.

These documents being thus described were numbered in succession, initialled and deposited in the criminal registry at nine in the evening, the *procès-verbal* being again signed by Titon, De Laurencel and Fremyn.

On the following day, the 11th, the commissioners again met to examine three documents which Titon had previously weeded out from a bundle of papers already classed as merely tending to throw light on the case, in order that they might be added to those tending to prove criminality.

"The first," written on two sheets of paper *à la Tellière*, which we have fastened together with red thread, contains six pages and six lines. It commences with the words, "Observations to the Court by M. de la Csse de Valois," and the sentences preserved are "to go into Champagne," "the Prince raised alarms," "to calm his agents," "like madmen and that he would take us as far as the gate of Meaux," "they do not serve to make the king believe all that I wish," "and have begged the Prince to tell him," "I have never shown any one," "my pension," "and perhaps my unhappy husband despairing at having wedded," "if I have wrongs, his Majesty." Every word altered, struck out or inserted, is noted by the commissioners, and attention is called to the fact, "that in the date of the year, 1776, the second 7 seems to have been written over the figure 6," and that at the bottom of the seventh page are written the following words, "Jeanne Marie De Valois de St. Remy, ensuite de Caze Csse de la Motte, de la pénicière," and lower down, "at the Bastille, Saturday, 29th August, 1785."

The second, written on a sheet of paper *à la Tellière*, and containing a page and a half, is the letter which we have quoted on page 187 *et seq.*

The third and last "is a note which seems to us to have been written by the hand of the said De la Motte, at the back of the list of linen given by her to her washerwoman, the twenty-fifth August, which note has been initialled and signed by the said De la Motte, and by the Commissioner Chenon, and runs as follows, 'M. Filliau of Bar sur Aube, being at my house four months ago, sold for me to a large jeweller, his cousin, to the amount of 30 thousand livres, which I also handed to Monseigneur. There were 22 small ones at 500 livres a-piece, . . . then 52 at 400 livres a-piece, which I begged M. Filliau to sell for me, unknown to my husband.' To which last document we have pasted a piece of white paper to inscribe the number of the said document, and to append our signature and that of the said Maître de Laurencel, as well as those that may have to be appended in course of the instruction."

The *procès-verbal* is then formally wound up and signed by Titon, De Laurencel, and Fremyn.

## SOME SATIRICAL VERSES,

TO WHICH THE NECKLACE AFFAIR GAVE RISE.

(From "Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette, la Cour et la Ville.")

## I.

Voici venir le temps pascal,  
 Que pensez-vous du cardinal ?  
 Opinez-vous qu'il chantera  
 Alleluia ?

Le Saint-Père l'avait rougi,  
 La cour de France l'a noirci,  
 Le Parlement le blanchira :  
 Alleluia !

Que Cagliostro ne soit rien,  
 Qu'il soit Maltais, Juif ou Chrétien,  
 A l'affaire que fait cela ?  
 Alleluia !

De Versailles comme à Paris,  
 Tous les grands et tous les petits  
 Veulent élargir Oliva :  
 Alleluia !

Planta, du fond de sa prison,  
 Demande grâce au bon Baron,  
 Qui lui dit qu'il y restera :  
 Alleluia !



De Valois le conte insensé,  
Par un Collier fut commencé,  
Un Collier le finira :

Alleluia !

Survient Villette l'écrivain,  
Confus d'avoir prêté sa main  
Comme La Motte l'exigea :

Alleluia !

Pour d'Etienville au teint vermeil,  
A la Grève un coup de soleil  
Sur l'épaule le frappera :

Alleluia !

Voilà l'histoire du procès  
Qui de Paris cause l'accès ;  
Nous dirons, quand il finira :

Alleluia !

---

## II.

Illustre prisonnier, tirez-vous d'embarras :  
Êtes-vous cardinal, ou ne l'êtes-vous pas ?  
Helas ! serait-ce vrai, que la cruelle Rome  
Ait pu dans sa fureur dégrader un saint homme ?  
Un Rohan ! Répondez. Vous détournez les yeux ;  
Ah ! vous pleurez le sort de vos tristes cheveux.  
Vous voilà donc réduit à la simple calotte !  
Ce n'est pas le seul mal que vous ait fait La Motte.

---

## III.

Target, dans un gros mémoire,  
A traité tant bien que mal  
La sotte et fâcheuse histoire  
De ce pauvre cardinal,

Où sa verbeuse oléquence  
 Et son froid raisonnement  
 Prouvent jusqu'à l'indécence  
 Que c'est un grand innocent.

J'entends le sénat de France  
 Lui dire un de ces matins :  
 Ayez un peu de décence,  
 Et laissez là vos catins.  
 Mais le Pape, moins honnête ;  
 Pourra dire à ce nigaud :  
 Prince, à qui n'a pas de tête,  
 Il ne faut pas de chapeau.

---

IV.

Cagliostro, homme savant,  
 Enseigne au Prince la magie.  
 Ils n'étaient que deux seulement,  
 Mais par tour de sorcellerie,  
 Les voilà trois : Qui l'eût prédit ?  
 De surprise ôtant sa calotte,  
 Le bon cardinal vit La Motte,  
 Et La Motte le vit.

---

V.

Malgré ce gros factum si souvent refondu,  
 Et l'arrêt de la cour si lestement rendu,  
 L'innocente candeur du prélat de Saverne  
 Brille comme un étr . . au fond d'une lanterne.

---

VI.

Des Valois La Motte est la fille,  
 On n'en peut douter :  
 Car un arrêt va lui faire porter  
 Les armes de sa famille.

## MEMORIAL

CONCERNING THE HOUSE OF SAINT-REMI DE VALOIS, SPRUNG FROM THE  
NATURAL SON WHOM HENRI II., KING OF FRANCE, HAD BY NICOLE  
DE SAVIGNY, LADY AND BARONESS DE SAINT-REMI.

---

ARMS OF THE HOUSE DE SAINT-REMI DE VALOIS.

*Argent, a fess azure charged with three fleurs-de-luce or.*

---

HENRI THE SECOND, King of France, had by Nicole de Savigny,<sup>1</sup> Henri de Saint-Remi, who follows. The said Nicole de Savigny, styled High and Puissant Lady, Lady of Saint-Remi, Fontette, du Chatellier and Noez, married Jean de Ville, Knight of the King's Order, and made her last will on the 12th of January, 1590, in which she declared, "That the late King Henri the Second had made a donation to Henri Monsieur, his son, the sum of 30,000 crowns sol. which she had received in 1558."

II. DEGREE. *Fourth Progenitor.*] Henri de Saint-Remi, called Henri Monsieur, is styled High and Puissant Lord, Knight, Lord of the Manors and Baron du Chatellier, Fontette, Noez and Beauvoir, Knight of the King's Order, Gentleman of the Bed-chamber in Ordinary, Colonel of a regiment of horse, and of foot, and Governor of Château-Villain; married by contract October 31, 1592, articleed at Essoyes, in Champagne, Dame Christiana de Luz, styled High and Puissant Lady, relict of Claude de Fresnay, Lord of Loupy, Knight of the King's Order, and daughter of the Hon. Jacques de Luz, also Knight of the King's Order, and of Lady

<sup>1</sup> "Genealogical History of the House of France," by Father Anselme, vol. i. p. 136; "History of France," by the President Henault, third edition, in quarto, p. 315.



Michelle du Fay, Lord and Lady of Bazoilles ; died at Paris on the 14th of February, 1621, and had of his marriage the son who follows :

III. DEGREE. *Third Progenitor.*] Renatus de Saint-Remi, styled High and Puissant Lord, Knight, Lord and Baron de Fontette, Gentleman in Ordinary to the King's Bed-chamber, Captain of a hundred men-at-arms, died March 11, 1663, and had married, by articles entered into April 25, 1646, at Essoyes, Jacqueline Brevau, by whom, amongst others, he had the following son :

IV. DEGREE. *Great Grandfather.*] Pierre Jean de Saint-Remi de Valois, styled High and Puissant Lord, Knight, Lord of Fontette, Major of the regiment of Bachevilliers' horse, was born September 9, 1649, and baptized at Fontette, October 12, 1653 ; married first to Demoiselle Reine Marguerite de Courtois, and a second time by articles passed on January 18, 1673, at St. Aubin, in the Bishopric of Toul, to Demoiselle Marie de Mullot, daughter of Messire Paul de Mullot, and of Dame Charlotte de Chaslus, died before the 14th of March, 1714 ; and of his second marriage had a son, who follows :

V. DEGREE. *Grandfather.*] Nicolas Renatus de Saint-Remi de Valois, styled Knight, Baron de Saint-Remi, and Lord of Luz, was baptized at Saint Aubin-aux-Auges, in the Bishopric of Toul, the 12th of April, 1678, served the King during ten years, as *garde-du-corps* to his majesty, in the Duke de Charost's company, quitted the service to marry by articles of the 14th of March, 1714, Demoiselle Marie Elisabeth de Vienne, daughter of Nicolas François de Vienne, Knight, Lord and Baron de Fontette, Noez, &c., counsellor to the King, president, Lieutenant-general in matters both civil and criminal, in the royal Bailiwick of Bar-sur-Seine, and of Dame Elisabeth de Merille, died at Fontette, on the 3rd of October, 1759 ; and of his marriage had two sons : first, Pierre Nicolas Renatus de Saint-Remi de Fontette, born at Fontette, June 3, 1716, received in 1744, a Gentleman cadet in the regiment of Grassin, where it is assured he was killed in an engagement against the king's enemies ; and second, Jacques, who follows :

VI. DEGREE. *Father.*] Jacques de Saint-Remi de Valois, first

called de Luz, and afterwards de Valois, styled Knight, Baron de Saint-Remi, was born at Fontette, December 22, 1717, and baptized January 1, 1718. In his baptismal attestation which contains his name and condition, his father, thereat present, is called and styled, "Messire Nicolas Renatus de Saint-Remi de Valois, Baron de Saint-Remi;" and his aunt, who was one of the sponsors, is therein called "Demoiselle Barbe Thérèse, daughter of the late Messire Pierre Jean de Saint-Remi de Valois." Both of them signed their names to it, Saint-Remi de Valois. He espoused, in the parish church of St. Martin, at Langres, on the 14th of August, 1755, Marie Jossel, by whom he already had a son, who follows: and died at the Hôtel Dieu, in Paris, February 16, 1762, according to the register of his death, in which he is called and styled, "Jacques de Valois, Knight, Baron de Saint-Remi."

VII. DEGREE. *Procreating.*] Jacques de Saint-Remi de Valois, born February 25, 1755, and baptized the same day in the parochial church of St. Peter and St. Paul, in the city of Langres; acknowledged and baptized by his father and mother in the act of their espousals of the 14th of August, of the same year.<sup>1</sup>

Jeanne de Saint-Remi de Valois, born at Fontette, July 22, 1756.

Marianne de Saint-Remi de Valois, born also at Fontette, October 2, 1757.

We, Antoine Marie d'Hozier de Sérigny, Knight, Judge at Arms of the Nobility of France, Knight Honorary Grand Cross of the Royal Order of St. Maurice of Sardinia, do certify unto the King, the truth of the facts certified in the above Memorial drawn up by us from authentic records.

In witness thereof we have signed the present certificate, and caused it to be countersigned by our Secretary, who has put to it the seal of our arms.

Done at Paris, on Monday, the 6th day of the month of May, in the year 1776:

*Signed* D'HOZIER DE SÉRIGNY:

By Monsieur the Judge at Arms of the Nobility of France.

*Signed* DUPLESIS.

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with French law this proceeding rendered him legitimate.

We, the undersigned Judge at Arms of the Nobility of France, &c., do certify that this copy of the present Memorial is conformable to the record preserved in our repository of Nobility ; in witness whereof we have signed it, and caused it to be countersigned by our secretary, who has affixed to it the seal of our arms.

Done at Paris, on Thursday, the 13th day of the month of October, in the year 1785,

*Signed* D'HOZIER DE SÉRIGNY :

By Monsieur the Judge at Arms of the Nobility of France.

*Signed* DUPLESIIS.



## ABSTRACT OF THE DECLARATION

MADE BY BETTE D'ÉTIENVILLE IN THE NECKLACE AFFAIR.

WHEN the examination of the parties accused of being concerned in the Necklace fraud had terminated, an individual calling himself Bette d'Étienville, detained for debt in the prison of the Châtelet, wrote to the Procureur-Général to announce that he had revelations to make in connection with the affair whereby a new inquiry on the part of this official became necessary.

Jean-Charles-Vincent de Bette d'Étienville, bourgeois of Saint-Omer, living nobly and on his own resources, as he described himself as doing, was an adventurer of the worst kind; his name was only Bette, and it was from pure fancy that he had made the fantastic addition of 'd'Étienville;' he was not a bourgeois of Saint-Omer, but simply a surgical *student* of Lille; neither did he live nobly and on his own resources, since his father was only a workman, a stone-quarrier, in fact; and with regard to himself, he had espoused at Lille, against the wish of his family, an old maid sixty years of age, whose property he wasted in a very short space of time, when he abandoned her, and repaired to Paris to solicit the privilege *des almanachs chantants*. Such were the antecedents of this individual, who made before the examining magistrates a declaration of which the following is the substance; and which gave an entirely new interest to the Necklace affair, producing, as it did, almost a score of declarations in reply, and numerous memorials drawn up with the view of confuting it. On a very slight substratum of fact Bette d'Étienville managed to raise a pile of falsehood which served to complicate for a time in the eyes of the bewildered public the already sufficiently intricate affair of the Necklace.

About the 8th of February, 1785, Bette made the acquaintance, at the café de Valois, of a Sieur Augeard, who called himself the

steward of a Dame de Courville. This Augeard proposed to him to mix himself up with a marriage; he spoke to him of a lady who had formerly had a child by a very great lord, and who desired to give a position to her offspring. The lady wished to marry a gentleman of title. Bette refused at first to have anything to do with the business, but the steward having promised him numerous advantages, he eventually consented, and set forth in search of a husband. He first addressed himself to the Count Xavier de Vinesacq, captain of infantry, and chevalier of the order of Saint-Louis, to whom he was in the habit of selling *eau de Cologne*; but this individual, distrusting the morality of the intermediary, gave an absolute refusal to the proposition made to him.

On the Monday in Holy Week of the same year, a certain Baron de Fages, belonging to the body-guard of the Count de Provence, sought out Bette, and proposed himself for the marriage in question; he added that he was a real gentleman, and that his titles to that rank had been left by him with the Abbé Mulot, Grand Prior of Saint-Victor. D'Étienville went to the abbé, received from him the titles in question, and gave them to Augeard, that he might show them to the lady of quality; she was satisfied with them, and some days afterwards intimated that she accepted the Baron de Fages for her future husband, and that the union should take place after Quasimodo (the Sunday after Easter).

When this epoch had arrived, Augeard told Bette that, owing to various circumstances, the marriage must be delayed; but as Bette did not appear to believe what he said, Augeard proposed to take him to the lady, exacting from him, however, a promise of the most profound secrecy. Three days before Quasimodo, Augeard conducted him to a house, where he saw a lady about thirty-four years old, of a fine figure, but inclined to embonpoint, and having black eyes. This lady confirmed what Augeard had said, and after having required secrecy from him, confided to him that the child's father was, after the princes of the blood, one of the greatest lords in the kingdom, and that this affair would be the means of making Bette's fortune. The next day Bette went again to the lady's, accompanied by Augeard, and found there a person, whom he did not know, who was sometimes called Marsilly, and sometimes Councillor, and who had directed the affair throughout its

entire course. Marsilly made inquiries of him respecting the Baron de Fages, his conduct, manners, &c., and then went out. The lady now showed d'Étienville her jewels and unmounted diamonds, which belonged, she told him, to a *rivière* of diamonds which she used formerly to wear, and which had been valued at 432,000 livres (francs). She added that she wished to sell them before her marriage, but had reasons for not disposing of them in Paris, and proposed to him to go to Holland with some one she would name, and to sell them there; from the proceeds of this sale 100,000 livres were to be given as a bridal present to the Baron de Fages. But Bette, fearful of arrest for being found in possession of such valuable property, refused, and communicated all these details to the Baron de Fages, on the part of Madame Méla de Courville, as the lady styled herself. Bette, who felt disquieted at the mystery which seemed to overhang these interviews, took particular notice of the house and street to which Augeard conducted him, and on going there alone, discovered that the house was Madame de la Motte's, and that the Cardinal de Rohan was in the frequent habit of going there. Feeling at that time persuaded that Madame de la Motte and the Dame de Courville were one and the same person, and being unaware that Madame de la Motte was married, he remained quiet; but events soon undeceived him, since the public prints apprised him of Madame de la Motte's arrest at Bar-sur-Aube, on the very day that he was at Arras with the Dame de Courville.

The day of Quasimodo having passed, the marriage was fixed for the 10th or 12th of April. At this period Augeard told Bette that the Cardinal de Rohan wished to see him. Bette betook himself to the Dame de Courville's where he found Marsilly and the Cardinal; the latter attired in a grey frock-coat, and a round hat with gold tassels. The Cardinal expressed to him his satisfaction at the zeal he had shown, and assured him that he would charge himself with his future fortune. After having spoken to Marsilly and the Dame de Courville in private, he came back to him and told him that, for reasons of the highest importance, the marriage could only take place from the 1st to the 15th of July. He charged Bette to inform the Baron de Fages of this; whereupon a letter was written immediately, according to Marsilly's dictation. The Baron de Fages



accepted the delay, and it was agreed that, in order to compensate him, in case the marriage should not take place, the Dame de Courville should bind herself to pay him 30,000 livres, in three separate sums : the first on the 15th of August ; the second on the 15th of October ; and the third on the 15th of December. The bond was given to Bette, sealed with the Dame de Courville's seal ; he, afraid of losing it, gave it to the Abbé Mulot, who was perfectly willing to take charge of it. It was at this period that the Dame de Courville told him in confidence that she was a baroness, and of high birth, and ex-canoness of a chapter in Germany, where she first became acquainted with the Cardinal, who had seduced her ; that she had afterwards lived with him, and had a child by him ; that she had followed the Grand Almoner to Paris, Strasbourg, into Germany, to Vienna, and elsewhere ; and lastly, that she was the Baroness de Solleberg, or Salleberg. The Baroness spoke German, Italian, and French well. In the month of May, 1785, she made fresh proposals to Bette to go and sell her diamonds in Holland ; but on his refusing, she no longer insisted. Some time after she told him she had sold a part of them, and had had the others mounted ; she also showed him a snuff-box, with her portrait surrounded with brilliants, a watch and chain set with diamonds, a ring, and a solitaire, begging him to speak of them to the Baron de Fages, for whom they were intended. On the 1st of July, Bette asked Madame de Courville if she thought the marriage would take place on the 15th ; she replied in the affirmative, and added that the Cardinal would remain in Paris for the purpose. Nevertheless, the 15th went by, and Madame de Courville, observing Bette's inquietude, promised to procure him a new interview with the Cardinal. On the 18th or 20th of July, about eleven o'clock at night, he met the Cardinal at Madame de Courville's, dressed this time in a short violet frock-coat. He told Bette not to blame him if the marriage did not take place, since it would be entirely Madame de Courville's fault. Then this lady assured him that the Cardinal had promised her 500,000 livres (francs) on her marriage, and that until the 500,000 livres were counted down, she would proceed no further in the matter. Bette took care to inform the Baron de Fages of all that transpired at this interview.

About this time, Madame de Courville went to pass a few days

in the country, and invited Bette, as well as the Abbé Mulot and the Baron de Fages, to visit her. The marriage ought to have taken place on the 12th of August, the day appointed for the payment of the 500,000 livres. On the 7th, Bette returned from Chantilly, where the Baron de Fages then was, when he received a note requesting him to go to Madame de Courville's. Arrived there, he found her in tears, when she asked him to return the bond for 30,000 livres signed by her. Bette thereupon withdrew it from the Abbé Mulot's possession, and returned it to her. Madame de Courville immediately tore it up and burnt it, adding, that if she did not leave Paris she was lost; she begged him to go with her, promising that her absence should not be long. Overcome by her entreaties, he agreed. Madame de Courville then sent him to engage a place in the diligence for Saint-Omer, in the name of Wanin, this being the name he passed under in her house. She observed to him that it would not be prudent for them to leave together; that she would travel in her chaise, and would stop at Arras, where she would await him. Arrived there, she told him that she was going to leave France, and that, if he was prudent, he would do the same, because he was mixed up in a grave business, the Cardinal having been arrested the previous evening and conducted to the Bastille; she even offered to take him with her to London. Bette then inquired the causes of the Cardinal's detention, and learnt from Madame de Courville that he had bought a Diamond Necklace, and had introduced into the negotiation for the purchase the name of the Queen, and that his aim was to procure the 500,000 livres necessary for her marriage portion, and to put himself in funds, and that the diamonds she had shown him, and was showing then at that very moment in a box, formed part of the Necklace in question.

Bette refused to accompany Madame de Courville to London, for fear lest this journey might compromise him. He asked her for payment of the 30,000 livres; she replied that the demand was a just one, and that she would satisfy it at Saint-Omer, if he did not consent to follow her. But one time when they had stopped to change horses, he all at once saw Madame de Courville returning towards Paris, in company of a man clad in a blue frock-coat. He believed she was arrested, and on his arrival at Saint-Omer the

truth of the Cardinal's misadventure was confirmed to him. He, for his part, betook himself to Dunkerque, where he remained till the 16th of September, 1785.

The bourgeois of Saint-Omer, living nobly and on his own resources, having made the aforesaid deposition, estimated it at the price of three livres, and was re-conducted to the prison of the Châtelet.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Marie-Antoinette et le procès du Collier," p. 109, *et seq.*

THE END.





